

Mental Health Liaison Group

December 19, 2017

The Honorable Bill Foster
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Ryan
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Evan H. Jenkins
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Foster, Fitzpatrick, Ryan and Jenkins:

The Mental Health Liaison Group is writing today to thank you for your leadership in authoring legislation to modify existing Medicaid payment prohibitions to allow payments for certain residential treatment facilities to treat individuals with substance use disorders. Your bill – the Medicaid Coverage for Addiction Recovery Expansion (CARE) Act, H.R. 2687 - would improve access to needed substance use treatment services for millions of Americans across the country.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 22 million Americans aged 12 or older have experienced a substance use or abuse disorder. Fatal drug overdoses are a leading cause of accidental death in our country. Approximately 38,000 people die each year from drug overdose. That's more than 100 per day, with 40 deaths per day from opioid drugs alone. Opioid and heroin addiction is destroying lives, disrupting families and destabilizing communities. Your legislation would expand access and infuse needed funding to better treat the underserved and at-risk patient population.

The payment prohibition, known as the “Institutes for Mental Disease (IMD) Exclusion”, was created in the early days of the Medicaid program – an era when today’s robust community-based addiction treatment system did not exist – as a way to ensure that states retained financial responsibility for mental hospitals.

Today, the exclusion prevents Medicaid from providing federal matching funds for services provided in residential substance use settings with more than 16 beds, hindering patients’ access to care. Your bill would increase the bed limit in these settings from 16 to include the first 40 beds in any facility, greatly expanding the number of facilities capable of servicing this population. By alleviating this prohibition and allowing facilities to offer treatment services for up to 60 consecutive days, your bill implements vitally important components to a comprehensive strategy addressing the nation’s opioid epidemic.

Thank you for your leadership and continued dedication to expanding access to lifesaving treatment for millions of Americans living with substance use and abuse disorders. The Mental Health Liaison Group pledges to fight side-by-side with you to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Laurel Stine, JD, American Psychological Association at lstine@apa.org, Angela Kimball, National Alliance on Mental Illness at akimball@nami.org and Debbie Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Mental Health America at dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Clinical Social Work Association
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies
Eating Disorders Coalition
EMDR International Association
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
The Jewish Federations of North America
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Counties
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition for Maternal Mental Health
National Council for Behavioral Health
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
NHMH - No Health without Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
Treatment Communities of America
Trevor Project
Young Invincibles