



June 27, 2019

The Honorable Ann Kuster
U.S. House of Representatives
320 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ed Markey
United States Senate
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Community Re-entry through Addiction Treatment to Enhance (CREATE)
Opportunities Act

Dear Representative Kuster and Senator Markey,

The undersigned organizations in the Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose (CSOO) are writing today to voice our support for your bill – the Community Re-entry through Addiction Treatment to Enhance (CREATE) Opportunities Act. CSOO is a coalition of diverse organizations united around common policy goals to reduce opioid overdose deaths. CSOO members aim to elevate the national conversation around opioid overdose and work to enact meaningful and comprehensive policy changes that support evidence-based prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support services.

The morbidity and mortality statistics related to addiction, and in particular addiction involving opioid use, are grim. In 2017, there were a record 70,237 drug overdose deaths in the United States, two-thirds of which have been linked to opioids.ⁱ Furthermore, those who report opioid use are significantly more likely to interact with the criminal justice system than those who do not report opioid use.ⁱⁱ It is vital that those who are incarcerated while suffering from opioid use disorder (OUD) receive the treatment they need to improve their health outcomes and decrease recidivism. Fortunately, medication-assisted treatment (MAT) has proven to be successful in treating OUD. Those receiving MAT as part of their treatment are 75% less likely to experience a mortality related to addiction than those not receiving MAT, and are more likely to maintain gainful employment.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, MAT has been shown to reduce recidivism, illegal drug overdose deaths, and infectious disease transmission.^{iv} Given the positive impact of MAT, we appreciate your leadership in the introduction of the CREATE Opportunities Act.

The CREATE Opportunities Act would provide \$50 million each year from FY2020 through FY2023 for the Attorney General to make grants and enter into cooperative agreements with states and local governments to develop, implement, or expand programs to provide MAT to individuals who have OUD and are incarcerated. The bill also sets forth robust requirements for the covered programs, such as requiring that they offer two or more drugs that have been approved for the treatment of an opioid use



disorder and do not contain the same active moiety. The bill additionally requires that the covered programs maintain access to personnel that are sufficiently trained to provide services such as education, medication prescription and administration, screening, counseling, recovery support, and withdrawal management. Furthermore, the bill addresses the increased risk of overdose for those recently released from prison by requiring that covered programs identify resources that can help individuals pay for continued MAT treatment upon their release. These provisions, among others in your bill, give individuals who have OUD and are incarcerated a chance to break the cycle of addiction and lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

We would like to thank you for introducing the CREATE Opportunities Act, and we look forward to working with you to secure its passage.

Sincerely,

AIDS United
American College of Medical Toxicology
American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)
CADA of Northwest Louisiana
Center on Addiction + Partnership for Drug-Free Kids
Central City Concern
Connecticut Certification Board
Harm Reduction Coalition
HIV Alliance
National Alliance for Medication Assisted Recovery
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Safety Council
Shatterproof
SMART Recovery
The Kennedy Forum
Young People in Recovery

ⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health". September 2018.

COALITION TO
STOP OPIOID
OVERDOSE

ⁱⁱ Winkelman, T.N.A., Chang, V.W., & Binswanger, I.A. (2018). Health, Polysubstance Use, and Criminal Justice Involvement among Adults with Varying Levels of Opioid Use. *JAMA Network Open*, 1(3): e180558. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.0558

ⁱⁱⁱ Legal Action Center. (2015). *Confronting an Epidemic: The Case for Eliminating Barriers to Medication Assisted Treatment of Heroin and Opioid Addiction*. Washington, D.C: Legal Action Center. Available at <https://lac.org/resources/substance-use-resources/medication-assisted-treatment-resources/case-for-eliminating-barriers-to-medication-assisted-treatment-of-heroin-and-opioid-addiction/>

^{iv} Treatment Research Institute (TRI), Ed. "Cost & Utilization Outcomes of Opioid- Dependence Treatment." *American Journal of Managed Care* 2011. Available at https://www.ajmc.com/journals/supplement/2011/a369_june11/a369_11jun_alcohol_s235to48