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May 31, 2017

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our strong support for your recently introduced legislation, the “Medicaid Coverage for Addiction Recovery Expansion Act” (Medicaid CARE Act, S. 1169), which would provide states with an option to provide medical assistance to individuals for inpatient services to treat substance use disorders at facilities with up to 40 beds.

As you are well aware, the toll of the ongoing opioid epidemic remains substantial, both in lives lost and the cost to society. While progress has been made in reducing the number of opioid prescriptions written in every state, a number of factors, including the influx of other substances, such as heroin and illegally imported fentanyl, continue to result in unacceptable numbers of overdoses and death. If we are to truly gain a foothold to reverse this public health epidemic, treatment and recovery services must be a central focus.

Medicaid expansion and the required coverage of treatment for substance use disorders under the Affordable Care Act have made access to treatment services available to millions of individuals for whom treatment was previously out of reach. However, even as millions have gained the means to access treatment, the capacity to provide these services remains limited. While strides continue to be made to increase the number of physicians and other providers who can care for these patients in the outpatient setting, the existing limit on the size of inpatient facilities continues to hamper access to treatment in those settings.

The Medicaid CARE Act has the potential to greatly expand access to medically and scientifically proven treatment options, just as the demand for these services continues to grow. We look forward to working with you to advance this proposal and to continue to explore additional opportunities to preserve and grow access to substance use disorder treatment services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD