

September 16, 2019

The Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris
Capitol Office, Room 4144
P.O. 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

Re: California Assembly Bill 920, Substance Abuse Recovery or Treatment Providers

Dear Assembly Member Petrie-Norris:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support for Assembly Bill (A.B.) 920. The AMA supports this bill for its focus on helping ensure patients who receive treatment for a substance use disorder in California receive evidence-based treatment. Based on our analysis, A.B. 920 accomplishes this important goal in three ways.

First, it requires use of “[E]vidence-based standards that are equivalent to the American Society of Addiction Medicine treatment criteria as those criteria existed on January 1, 2019, or the latest adopted version as the minimum standard of care for licensed programs.” The AMA has been deeply concerned by reports¹ of treatment facilities using non-evidence-based standards, “brokers” who prey on patient vulnerabilities, and the perception that some in this industry are driven by profits rather than patient care. With its emphasis on evidence-based standards, A.B. 920 will help end those practices.

Second, to help further the need to ensure the use of evidence-based standards, the AMA strongly supports A.B. 920’s specific inclusion of the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California and the California Society of Addiction Medicine to help develop the regulations governing implementation of A.B. 920. The AMA points out that there are additional professional medical societies that can provide evidence-based support to the regulatory process to protect patients with a mental disorder or substance use disorder who are children, adolescents, or who may be pregnant or a new mother. These include the American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Family Physicians and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The AMA is confident that our colleagues at the California Medical Association can provide contact information and referrals to each of those organizations.

Third, the AMA strongly supports the provision that requires “[a] program licensed under this chapter shall not ban the use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to any client in its program if that client

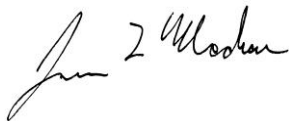
¹ See, for example, reports gathered by the Orange County Register on the “Rehab-Riveria” at <https://www.ocregister.com/rehab-riveria/>; and also <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2019/02/opioid-epidemic-rehab-recruiters/>

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meets the ASAM criteria for MAT.” Clinical experience and years of data demonstrate that MAT—typically referred to as the use of buprenorphine, methadone or naltrexone—saves lives. In fact, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine recently published an authoritative review titled, “Medications for opioid use disorder save lives.”² As such, it is now accepted that if a treatment facility does not offer MAT for the treatment of an opioid use disorder, it will likely not be following the medical standard of care.

Thank you for your leadership in helping provide strong standards for patients to rely upon when seeking treatment for an opioid use disorder. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, American Medical Association at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4954.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: California Medical Association
Jack Resneck, Jr., MD
Sarah Mae Smith

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. Medications for opioid use disorder save lives. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/25310>.