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February 21, 2020

The Honorable Geoff Gratwick of Penobscot
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine State Legislature
1230 Kenduskeag Avenue
Bangor, ME 04401

The Honorable Patty Hymanson of York
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine State Legislature
34 High Pine Road
York, ME 03909

Re: AMA support of Maine Legislative Document 1934

Dear Senator Gratwick and Representative Hymanson:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and student members, I am writing in strong support of Maine Legislative Document 1934 (L.D. 1934), which would remove prior authorization requirements for medications used to help treat opioid use disorder for patients in MaineCare, often referred to as medication-assisted treatment (MAT). The AMA strongly agrees with the Maine Medical Association (MMA) and other advocates that L.D. 1934 is necessary to expand access to MAT for patients in MaineCare and continue efforts to broadly remove barriers to evidence-based care in Maine.

The primary reason the AMA supports increased access to MAT, including removing barriers such as prior authorization, is that MAT is proven to save lives. In 2019, more than one dozen states stood up to the health insurance lobby and took action to remove prior authorization barriers for MAT in commercial and/or Medicaid markets. Maine took that step for the commercial market, and now it is time to remove prior authorization barriers in MaineCare. L.D. 1934 would make this happen.

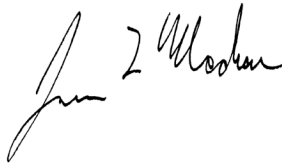
At a time when the epidemic has shifted from one primarily driven by overdose involving prescription opioids, the epidemic now is fueled by overdose primarily due to illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. All efforts must be made to remove barriers to MAT so that if and when a patient is ready to begin treatment for an opioid use disorder, there are no barriers for treatment to begin.

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We also note that while enhanced access to MAT is essential, it is only one part of a comprehensive effort needed to end the overdose and death epidemic in Maine and across the nation. The AMA has been pleased to support harm reduction efforts in Maine and other evidence-based initiatives to reduce opioid-related harm. Removing prior authorization to MAT is one of several key recommendations the AMA is making as part of our national advocacy efforts¹. We look forward to monitoring Maine's continuing leadership and promoting a positive vote in favor of L.D. 1934.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, 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 written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Maine Medical Association

¹ The AMA in 2019 released a national opioid policy roadmap with Manatt Health to highlight state-level best practices and provide recommendations to help end the epidemic. The roadmap is available at www.end-opioid-epidemic.org/national-roadmap