

March 16, 2020

The Honorable Brittany Pettersen
Colorado State Senate
200 E. Colfax
Room 346
Denver, CO 80203

Re: AMA Support Colorado Senate Bill 7

Dear Senator Pettersen:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I write in support of multiple provisions within Senate Bill 7 (S.B. 7), “An Act Concerning Treatment for Substance Use Disorders.” This bill continues an important policymaking trend in Colorado to enact evidence-based measures to help the state’s opioid-related overdose and death epidemic. The AMA commends your leadership.

Colorado was one of the states closely analyzed in the AMA-Manatt National Roadmap on State-Level Efforts to End the Opioid Epidemic (National Roadmap), and we are pleased that S.B. 7 incorporates several of the National Roadmap recommendations. The AMA applauds your leadership in developing strong legislative language from those policy recommendations. There are multiple areas in S.B. 7 that will help increase access to evidence-based care:

Section 1 – The AMA agrees that community-level assessments of the sufficiency of substance use disorder services are important for a state to help ensure resources are appropriately and efficiently allocated for the continuum of treatment services. This Section wisely promotes inclusion from many stakeholders, including those with lived experience of substance use disorders, public officials, law enforcement, schools, tribal leaders, veterans’ groups and others.

Section 2 – The AMA supports the increased emphasis on oversight and enforcement of the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA). The AMA has recommended for all states to use evidence-based guidelines such as the American Society of Addiction Medicine Criteria for Addictive, Substance-related and Co-occurring Conditions. This Section will help ensure that health insurers and behavioral health management organizations cannot use proprietary and substandard criteria for placement, medical necessity or utilization management.

Section 8 – The AMA supports the provisions to prohibit managed service organizations and any other payer from denying treatment to or prohibiting access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT). There is a growing trend in states to take this action. The AMA has helped support laws and other policies in more than one dozen states in the past two years. It is remarkable that health insurance companies still hold on to the false notion that prior authorization of MAT is necessary to save lives. The AMA, the U.S. Surgeon General and public health officials throughout the country take the opposite position, informed by evidence and clinical experience—that removing barriers to evidence-based care for opioid use disorder, including MAT, saves lives.

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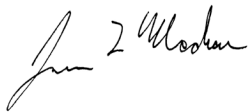
Sections 10, 11 and 12 – For the same reasons as the AMA supports Section 8, we support the provisions in Section 10, Section 11 and Section 12 that remove barriers to MAT in recovery residences and correctional settings.

Section 15 – The AMA supports having MAT medications included on a health insurance carrier’s formulary as part of an essential health benefits package. Moreover, we urge policymakers to support actions that would further require health insurance carriers to ensure MAT medications are placed on the lowest cost-sharing tier to further encourage access to affordable treatment.

Section 16 – One of the most challenging aspects of the epidemic has been the fact that patients with health insurance benefits that are supposed to cover treatment for substance use disorders have not been able to find an addiction medicine professional that is in-network and accepting new patients. Another challenge is when a patient’s physician prescribes MAT, but the insurance company requires prior authorization or denies the medication. The AMA has strongly advocated for health insurance companies to provide the information required under Section 16, and we are thankful the Colorado Legislature is taking this critical step to help evaluate what patients are facing on a daily basis.

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".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Colorado Medical Society