

September 27, 2016

The Honorable Loretta Weinberg
Majority Leader
New Jersey Senate
545 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Re: American Medical Association **strong support** for Assembly No. 4138, to require health benefits coverage for buprenorphine and buprenorphine/naloxone under certain conditions.

Dear Majority Leader Weinberg:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), please accept the AMA's strong support for Assembly No. 4138 (A4138) to help increase access to treatment for opioid use disorder. New Jersey, like every state in the nation, is experiencing an epidemic of opioid-related misuse, overdose and death. As part of a multifaceted approach to reversing this epidemic, the AMA advocates for several key policies, including increased use of prescription drug monitoring programs; enhanced prescriber education and training; greater access to naloxone; comprehensive treatment to non-opioid and non-pharmacologic pain care; and increased access to comprehensive treatment for an opioid use disorder.

New Jersey already has enacted several laws and supports policies that advance many of these key recommendations. A4138 would fill an important gap by improving insurance coverage for buprenorphine and buprenorphine-naloxone products. The AMA believes that requiring health benefits coverage for buprenorphine and buprenorphine/naloxone is the type of evidence-based policy that will save thousands of lives in New Jersey.

According to the 2015 U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report, "Prescription Drug Use and Misuse in the United States: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health," 822,000 people received treatment for the misuse of pain relievers. National estimates suggest that this may only reflect a fraction of the people who actually need treatment. Yet, burdensome prior authorization and limits on treatment still exist for many.

The data are clear that treatment for substance use disorder is highly effective and provides impressive savings to society. According to studies reported by SAMHSA, there are numerous economic, job-related, public health and medical benefits to treatment for substance use disorders, including:

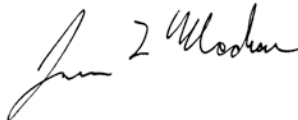
The Honorable Loretta Weinberg
September 27, 2016
Page 2

- 50 percent decrease in drug and alcohol use one year after completing treatment;
- 19 percent increase in employment and income;
- 80 percent decrease in criminal activity;
- 43 percent decrease in homelessness;
- 53 percent decrease in alcohol/drug related medical visits;
- 56 percent decrease in sexual encounters for money or drugs;
- 51 percent decrease in sexual encounters with an injection drug user;
- 50 percent decrease in medical expenses for individuals who received substance use treatment compared with those who did not; and
- 61 percent decrease in job-related absenteeism.

In the midst of a national epidemic, A4138 will have an immediate and beneficial impact on helping patients get the care they need for their opioid use disorder and provide many other tangible benefits for New Jersey. The AMA strongly urges the New Jersey Legislature to vote in support of A4138.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center at daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org or 312-464-4954.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Assemblyman Herb Conaway, Jr., MD
Assemblyman Joseph A. Lagana
Assemblyman Daniel R. Benson
Medical Society of New Jersey