

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chair
Committee on Energy & Commerce
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Overdose Prevention and Safety Act (HR 3545)

Dear Chair Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:


On behalf of OCHIN, Inc., the largest federally-funded Health Center Controlled Network (HCCN) in the nation headquartered in Portland, Oregon, I am writing this letter to convey our strong support of HR 3545 known as the "Overdose Prevention and Safety Act." OCHIN is a collaborative of health care organizations that are working together to provide integrated care for our nation's most vulnerable patients. We provide technology and telehealth, training, research, analytics, consultation, advocacy, and other wrap-around support services to nearly 800 clinic locations nationwide.

OCHIN believes integrated care is a priority for not only our network of federally-qualified health centers, public health systems and other safety net clinics, but it is also a key component of ensuring cost-effective, safe, and truly holistic care for all patients served throughout the country. As you are aware, 42 CFR Part 2 (Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records) has served a vital role in supporting individuals as they engage in recovery from drugs and alcohol; however, it was constructed in an era that predated modern technology. The authors and supporters could not even begin to conceive of how patient care would evolve in the following decades. Today, we know that integrated primary, behavioral, dental and other health care is essential for delivering safe, effective, responsible, and affordable care. It is time that these outdated rules are updated to reflect the technology and processes that are foundational to coordinating treatment and other services, including the exchange of records via health information technology. Unfortunately, 42 CFR Part 2 continues to serve as a barrier to coordinated and safe care. Physicians, counselors, therapists, pharmacists, and others need to be able to easily share information about their shared patients in seamless manner.

OCHIN is extremely encouraged by the bi-partisan support that the Energy and Commerce Committee has already received in its promotion of alternative payment models and other key activities. Aligning 42 CFR Part 2 with the federal HIPAA and HITECH rules is a next logical step in achieving streamlined, integrated care that is safe and effective, while supporting value-based pay. As you are evaluating your support for addictions treatment, we urge you to include the provisions that are in HR 3545 in any bill that is produced by the Committee.

OCHIN strongly supports the adoption of HR 3545 and aligning and streamlining care for our members. Thank you for your leadership on this very important issue.

Respectfully,


Jennifer Stoll

VP, Government Relations and Public Affairs, OCHIN