

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our support for the *Access to Telehealth Services for Opioid Use Disorders Act*. This legislation is critical to expanding access to treatment for opioid use disorders in the Medicare program.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Medicare population has among the fastest-growing rates of opioid use disorder, currently at more than 6 of every 1,000 beneficiaries. In order to stem the tide of this epidemic, Medicare beneficiaries must have access to treatment programs; however, more than half of U.S. counties lack any practicing behavioral health workers and 77 percent of counties report unmet behavioral health needs.

Technology can help bridge the gap of distance and stigma by allowing beneficiaries to receive care when and where they need it. Unfortunately, outdated laws and regulations prevent healthcare providers from using technology to provide care to most Medicare beneficiaries. The *Access to Telehealth Services for Opioid Use Disorders Act* is an important step in utilizing technology to combat the opioid epidemic by allowing the Secretary to waive these outdated laws and regulations if such waiver is expected to lower costs, improve quality, or increase access. This would allow Medicare beneficiaries to receive treatment when and where they need it – allowing providers to be with patients at the time of their most critical need.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to combatting the scourge of opioid abuse and misuse disorders. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Centerstone
Health IT Now
Intermountain Healthcare
LifeWIRE Corp
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
New Directions Technology Consulting, LLC
Teladoc

The Kennedy Forum