



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**
SERVICES, INC.

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chair
Health Subcommittee
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member
Health Subcommittee
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Guthrie:

I am writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) to express our support for your subcommittee’s work in considering legislation to address the worsening drug overdose epidemic as part of its April 14th hearing entitled “An Epidemic within a Pandemic: Understanding Substance use and Misuse in America.”

APA is the nation’s largest scientific and professional nonprofit membership organization representing the discipline and profession of psychology. APA has more than 122,000 members and associates who are clinicians, researchers, educators, consultants, and students. Through the application of psychological science and practice, our association’s mission is to make a positive impact on critical societal issues.

The CDC projects that there were more than 88,000 drug overdose deaths over the previous 12 months ending in August of 2020, an astounding 26.8% increase over the August 2019 figure.ⁱ The nation will likely have experienced a drug overdose death toll of more than 100,000 Americans over the course of 2020. The CDC’s data shows that opioids, and especially fentanyl, continue to account for the bulk of overdose deaths. However, overdose deaths associated with the use of psychostimulants such as methamphetamine increased by 46% over the previous year. CDC’s data also showed that overdose deaths attributable to the use of methamphetamine and other psychostimulants have been occurring in the American Indian/Alaska Native population at more than twice the rate of any other racial groups.ⁱⁱ APA’s latest *Stress in America* reportⁱⁱⁱ found that nearly one in four adults reported drinking more alcohol to cope with their stress during the coronavirus pandemic.

We must respond aggressively to address this mounting crisis, and we applaud your committee and its members in considering legislation on multiple policy issues. We would like to express our particular support for several bills to be discussed in the hearing.

- H.R. 654, the "Drug Free Communities Pandemic Relief Act". Communities vary widely in the nature of the drug overdose and substance use problems they face. The Drug Free Communities program incentivizes and supports communities in establishing their own programs. In the current crisis, and with sharply rising drug overdose deaths, we support waiving the program’s local matching requirement in order to maintain support for community-led programs.
- H.R. 955, the “Medicaid Reentry Act of 2021”. APA has long supported this legislation and we are hopeful that it can be enacted this year. Providing health care services to inmates under Medicaid for the 30-day period prior to their release will improve the ability of inmates with substance use disorders to avoid relapse upon leaving prison.

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- H.R. 1384, the “Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act of 2021”. The current law requirement that prescribing providers obtain a waiver from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) before prescribing buprenorphine for the treatment of substance use disorders is unnecessary and counterproductive, and serves as a barrier an important component of treatment for opioid use disorders.
- H.R. 2051, the “Methamphetamine Response Act of 2021”. As the CDC data referenced above shows, drug overdose deaths associated with methamphetamine use are rising sharply. Contingency management—a behavioral treatment developed by psychologists—is currently the only effective treatment for methamphetamine and cocaine use disorders, in addition to being an effective component of treatment for other substance use disorders. We strongly support the inclusion by the Office of National Drug Control Policy of initiatives to identify and address policy barriers related to contingency management interventions for stimulant use disorders, and to explore reimbursement for contingency management and digital treatments for substance use disorders, in its recent statement of drug policy priorities for this year.
- H.R. 2366, the “Support, Treatment, and Overdose Prevention of Fentanyl Act of 2021”. This legislation includes a wide array of initiatives to combat the drug overdose epidemic. We particularly endorse its provisions to study overdose prevention centers and establish harm reduction programs, to eliminate the requirement that an individual be addicted for at least one year before being admitted for maintenance treatment by an opioid treatment program, and to develop and implement contingency management programs. These are long overdue changes in our nation’s drug policy, and are consistent with the public health approach—in which substance use disorders are treated as a health condition, not a personal failing—which is necessary to stem the tide of overdose deaths. The most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows stunning increases in drug overdose deaths. APA’s most recent *Stress in America* report, released in March, found that nearly one in four U.S. adults reported drinking more alcohol to cope with their stress during the coronavirus pandemic.

Thank you for your leadership in continuing to improve our nation’s substance use treatment system, and for the opportunity to share comments. We look forward to working with you and your committee’s members on this vitally important issue.

Sincerely,



Katherine McGuire
Chief Advocacy Officer

ⁱ Ahmad FB, Rossen LM, Sutton P. Provisional drug overdose death counts. National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. Accessed at <https://cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>.

ⁱⁱ Volkow, N. National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021. “U.S. Overdose Deaths Involving Psychostimulants (Mostly Amphetamine), by Race” [Powerpoint presentation]. Accessed at <https://www.apa.org/members/content/methamphetamine-addiction>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2021/sia-pandemic-report.pdf>