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February 9, 2021

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Member of Congress
2369 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act

Dear Representative Tonko:

On behalf of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy® (NABP®), I am writing in strong support of the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act (MAT Act). Thank you for your continued leadership on this important legislation and for your long-standing commitment to ensuring that Americans with substance use disorder have access to much-needed medication-assisted treatment (MAT). The tireless work that you and your staff have done on this issue has made a significant difference to public health, and NABP appreciates the opportunity to work with you to advance the MAT Act in the 117th Congress.

NABP is a nonprofit association whose mission is to protect and promote public health by assisting its member state boards of pharmacy and offering programs to promote safe pharmacy practices for the benefit of patients. NABP is proud to support the boards in all 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and 10 Canadian provinces. As an association, we provide a wide variety of programs and services all underscored by our vision statement – innovating and collaborating today for a safer public health tomorrow. From inspection support to licensure transfer, examinations, and accreditation, NABP is involved in every step of pharmacy compliance and health promotion across the country.

NABP is deeply troubled by reports of spikes in drug overdoses across the country as the opioid epidemic continues to be exacerbated by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. Now more than ever, we must ensure that providers are equipped with the appropriate resources to combat the opioid crisis and are not burdened by unnecessary and unproven bureaucratic processes. Your bipartisan legislation, if enacted, will reduce barriers to care and improve patients' access to MAT by eliminating the redundant, outdated requirement that practitioners apply for a separate waiver through Drug Enforcement Administration to offer MAT to patients. Currently, only 7% of providers have taken the steps necessary to obtain the waiver and prescribe MAT. The rising demand for care coupled with an already dwindling substance use disorder workforce underscores how imperative it is for Congress to take purposeful steps to curb this epidemic by eliminating federal restrictions that are inhibiting evidence-based treatment options from being accessible to those in need.

With over 80,000 pharmacy locations across the country, pharmacists are uniquely positioned to expand access to this critical therapy. However, the current statute categorically prohibits pharmacists from using their medication expertise to help treat patients in need of MAT. Currently, pharmacists largely play a dispensing role in the provision of MAT; however, given their accessibility and expertise, pharmacists could easily take on the role of prescribing MAT, particularly to address gaps in care. Pharmacists can help develop treatment plans, communicate with patients, coordinate care, and monitor adherence and improvement, along with prescribing and dispensing buprenorphine medications. Pharmacists are accessible in nearly every community, including those that do not have convenient access to health care, much less providers who focus on treating opioid use disorder. Allowing pharmacists to prescribe MAT would have a significant impact on access to this important treatment. To do this, Congress must remove unnecessary federal restrictions and empower states to determine the appropriate provider requirements for their communities as states regulate providers' authority to prescribe. Pharmacists handle sensitive controlled substances every day, with little evidence of diversion or misuse. States across the country have also granted pharmacists authority to prescribe some drugs in specific situations and would likely consider allowing pharmacists to prescribe MAT if federal law did not prohibit it. Currently, federal law prevents this local decision making and prohibits pharmacists from providing access to critical MAT at a time of great need. The MAT Act proposes a sensible solution to amend the problematic statute that unreasonably limits the types of providers who can offer MAT, burdens the providers currently deemed qualified under the law, and preempts state regulatory authority.

Thank you for your continued leadership in Congress and for once again introducing the MAT Act. NABP looks forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to see the MAT Act advanced and ultimately enacted this Congress, finally removing the unnecessary waiver process that has created a barrier to care for too long. Please know that we stand ready to work with you to ensure that federal policies that safeguard public health, like the MAT Act, become law.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
BOARDS OF PHARMACY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Carter", with a stylized initial "A" and a flourish at the end.

Lemrey "Al" Carter, PharmD, MS, RPh
Executive Director/Secretary

cc: Representative Michael Turner
Representative Antonio Delgado
Representative Anthony Gonzalez