

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL CARTWRIGHT, CHAIRMAN & CEO  
OF  
AMERICAN ADDICTION CENTERS, INC.**

**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS**

**HEARING TO EXAMINE ADVERTISING AND MARKETING PRACTICES WITHIN  
THE SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT INDUSTRY**

**JULY 24, 2018**

My name is Michael Cartwright. I'm Chairman and CEO of American Addiction Centers, which operates 39 treatment locations in 9 states. I've been a treatment counselor and executive for 23 years. For 12 of those years I ran a non-profit treatment organization. I've run both publicly and privately funded treatment centers. I've advised the U.S. Senate Health Subcommittee on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services.

I also serve on the board of trustees of the National Association for Behavioral Healthcare, which for 85 years has advocated nationally for mental healthcare, including addiction treatment. Its members include AAC and other publicly traded healthcare companies, among them Hospital Corporation of America and Acadia Healthcare.

I've been in recovery for 26 years. As a young man, I struggled with addiction. I know the pain of untreated addiction and mental illness. AAC's mission is to help those who are struggling like I did, find the right psychiatric care and community support.

I'm glad that Congress is looking into treatment marketing practices. Treatment providers and government officials should work together not just to stop bad actors, but to let potential patients and their loved ones know who to trust.

AAC's Recovery Brands business operates online treatment directories, including [recovery.org](http://recovery.org) and [rehab.com](http://rehab.com). These directories provide information about treatment centers across the country, centers that are also approved and listed by the federal government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, on [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov).

In fact, about 300 treatment providers who are members of the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers, or NAATP, either list or advertise on our websites. A lot of treatment centers don't have a large online presence of their own. Addicts who need help reach these treatment centers through our websites.

We don't engage in unethical marketing practices, like hi-jacking phone numbers. We're not a call center aggregator. We don't take calls for other treatment centers, just for our own. We don't sell information gathered on calls. AAC opposes this kind of lead generation.

We make sure that our website visitors know who they are contacting. I've included with this statement a presentation that illustrates our transparency guidelines. Under these guidelines:

- *We work with treatment centers across the country to make sure their listings are up-to-date and accurate.*
- *We make clear that users know which treatment centers are going to answer the numbers they call.*
- *We make clear that AAC's toll-free number goes to AAC's call center and when they pick up, AAC call center reps identify themselves as AAC employees.*

Not all treatment centers market honestly. But they should. AAC supports legislation that:

- *Criminalizes fraudulent advertising,*
- *Outlaws tactics like the hijacking of treatment center phone numbers,*
- *Requires disclosure about who owns and operates call centers, and*
- *Bans kickbacks and bribes.*

AAC has supported this kind of legislation in its home state of Tennessee and elsewhere.

I have the following recommendations:

1. *Congress should ask the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, or the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws, to draft a model law banning deceptive marketing.*
2. *Existing or proposed laws in Tennessee, Florida and California should be considered as models for reform.*
3. *SAMHSA should update its treatment center locator regularly and should include sober homes in its listings. SAMHSA should prioritize sober homes that are members of the National Association of Recovery Residences.*
4. *Existing FTC truth-in-advertising guidelines should be used to stop misleading addiction treatment marketing.*

AAC also supports online advertiser vetting processes such as those currently being put into place by Google and its certifying agency, LegitScript LLC. AAC has offered to share its

viewpoints on industry advertising and marketing practices to LegitScript. AAC is glad that LegitScript is seeking the perspectives of participants across the industry, which we hope would include those of both for-profit and non-profit treatment operators, as well as members of the National Association for Behavioral Healthcare.

While there is rightfully a lot of attention being paid to bad marketing practices, I hope we don't lose sight of all the great work most treatment centers do. Treatment works. Research shows that those who follow sound treatment plans stay clean and sober. But those seeking help from addiction shouldn't have to worry about false advertising.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer your questions.