**EMBARGOED UNTIL 5/19/16 AT 9:30 AM ET**

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**The [insert state] Society of Addiction Medicine Calls on Legislators to Support Comprehensive Policies to Combat the U.S. Opioid Epidemic**

*As Part of the Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose, ASAM is Working to Advance Legislation that Will Address this Public Health Crisis*

[insert city, state], May 19, 2016 — [insert state] saw a [insert relevant data from <http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>] percent increase in deaths from drug overdose from 2013 to 2014 and more than 10 million Americans nationwide report misusing opioids. In response to this unprecedented and growing epidemic, the American Society of Addiction Medicine is leading the Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose, a group composed of leading state and national organizations that are committed to advancing meaningful legislative and regulatory policies.

“Opioid misuse is a public health crisis in [insert location]; in 2014 there were [insert relevant data from <http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>] drug overdose deaths reported in [insert state],” says [insert spokesperson]. “We are asking that [insert relevant Senator and Representative] help pass meaningful legislation in Congress this year.”

Congress, the Administration, public health agencies and a number of state legislatures have taken important initial steps to combat the opioid epidemic. Last week the House passed 18 bills. In March, a wide-ranging bill was passed by the full Senate and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) approved additional important legislation, which is pending before the full Senate. Now is the critical time to build on this progress and ensure that comprehensive legislation aimed at addressing opioid misuse, overdose and addiction is passed and funded appropriately.

On a national level, the Coalition’s efforts will focus around five key strategies to combat the opioid epidemic:

* Improving access to medication-assisted treatment for those with opioid addiction
* Expanding availability of naloxone in health care settings and beyond
* Implementing enhanced prescription drug monitoring programs that track the dispensing and prescribing of controlled substances
* Raising the level of opioid prescriber education
* Enacting the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act

Addiction is a chronic disease that too often goes untreated. More than half of Americans (56 percent) say that they or someone they know has misused, been addicted to, or died from prescription pain medications, according to a recent [Kaiser Health Tracking Poll](http://kff.org/health-reform/poll-finding/kaiser-health-tracking-poll-november-2015/). When patients can’t access treatment and recovery support services, addiction can lead to disability or premature death.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of death from opioid-related overdose has quadrupled since the year 2000. Drug overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, surpassing even traffic fatalities. And emergency room visits linked to misuse of prescription opioids are up by more than 50 percent since 2004.

The epidemic is compounded by the vast gap in access to opioid addiction treatment. There are three FDA-approved medications approved to treat opioid use disorder. Patients need access to all available options so they can find what works for them; however, current prescribing limits restrict access to one of these treatment options. Additionally, there is a lack of access to medication that can help prevent and reverse opioid overdose.

The Coalition held its inaugural meeting today at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center in Washington D.C. where speakers, including Dr. Jay Kaplan, President of the American College of Emergency Physicians, Justin Luke Riley, Advocate, Young People in Recovery and Dr. Yngvild Olsen, Director at Large of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, discussed strategies for addressing the opioid epidemic.

For more information about the Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose, please visit <http://www.stopopioidoverdose.org/>.

**About the Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose**

The Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose is an organization of state and national groups that are committed to advancing meaningful legislative and regulatory policies in response to the opioid epidemic. The Coalition seeks to address the U.S. opioid epidemic by engaging policy makers, public health leaders, chronic pain and addiction specialists, individuals in and seeking recovery and family members, so that legislation and policies get the support needed to pass Congress this year and become law.

**About the American Society of Addiction Medicine**

The American Society of Addiction Medicine is a national medical specialty society of over 3,000 physicians and associated professionals. Its mission is to increase access to and improve the quality of addiction treatment, to educate physicians, and other health care providers and the public, to support research and prevention, to promote the appropriate role of the physician in the care of patients with addictive disorders, and to establish Addiction Medicine as a specialty recognized by professional organizations, governments, physicians, purchasers and consumers of health care services and the general public. ASAM was founded in 1954, and has had a seat in the American Medical Association House of Delegates since 1988.

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