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## **ASAM Vice President Testifies at Congressional Oversight Hearing on Federal Response to Addiction and Overdose Crisis**

*Yngvild Olsen, MD, MPH urged lawmakers to expand access to evidence-based addiction treatment and invest more resources to address the addiction and overdose crisis during today's House Committee on Oversight and Reform Hearing*

**Rockville, MD** – Leaders in the addiction medicine community urged Congress to devote targeted resources to address the addiction and overdose crisis during today's US House Committee on Oversight and Reform Hearing, "Medical Experts: Inadequate Federal Approach to Opioid Treatment and the Need to Expand Care."

Yngvild Olsen, MD, MPH, vice president of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and Medical Director for the Institutes for Behavior Resources Inc/REACH Health Services in Baltimore, Maryland, provided expert testimony on the need to expand evidence-based addiction treatment, including medications for addiction treatment, which has been shown to reduce crime, increase employment and lower the transmission of infectious disease.

Access to such treatment has been tragically lacking. While increased federal funding has been a welcome and important step, it is nonetheless insufficient in addressing an opioid-related overdose crisis that takes the lives of [roughly 130 Americans each day](#). Emphasizing this reality, Dr. Olsen urged Congress to invest the resources necessary to develop a robust addiction treatment infrastructure that will save lives. Specifically, Dr. Olsen highlighted the recently introduced [Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency \(CARE\) Act](#), which would authorize \$100 billion dollars over the next 10 years to help communities provide critically needed and evidence-based addiction prevention, treatment, engagement, and recovery services. The CARE Act is modeled after the Ryan White Care Act, which is credited with helping the country make significant strides against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

"Instead of only focusing on some people with addiction – based on address or class or race or ethnicity – we should embrace the following: Everyone with addiction deserves the opportunity for treatment and recovery," Dr. Olsen testified. "It's time for the United States to take a compassionate, humane, and public health approach to this crisis."



According to the [latest estimates](#), nearly 21 million Americans needed treatment for substance use disorder (SUD) in 2017, but only 4 million received any form of treatment or ancillary services. The lack of adequate addiction treatment infrastructure contributed to a record [70,237 drug overdose in deaths 2017](#), two-thirds of which have been linked to opioids.

A severe workforce shortage compounds the issue of access for those seeking addiction treatment. [Some estimates](#) suggest there are about 4,400 actively practicing certified addiction specialist physicians (addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry) in the US. This falls well below the 6,000 addiction specialists needed based on a 2009 estimate, and even that number is now insufficient given the current crisis. To address the workforce shortage, the CARE Act allocates billions of dollars to support the training of health professionals in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of SUD. This includes funding to train medical school faculty to teach students to provide for the needs of individuals with SUD or those at risk of developing a SUD.

To view a video of the hearing and read a copy of Dr. Olsen's testimony, [CLICK HERE](#).

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### **About ASAM**

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 6,000 physicians, clinicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction. For more information, visit [www.ASAM.org](http://www.ASAM.org).

### **About Dr. Olsen**

Yngvild Olsen, MD, MPH, is the Medical Director for the Institutes for Behavior Resources Inc/REACH Health Services, a comprehensive outpatient addiction treatment center in Baltimore City. She also provides part-time medical consultation to the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City and the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration. After medical training at Harvard Medical School, and internal medicine residency with a year as Primary Care Chief Resident at the Boston Medical Center, she received a Master's in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health as part of a fellowship in General Internal Medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She has previously served as the Vice President of Clinical Affairs for the Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, as the Deputy Health Officer for the Harford County Health Department, and as the Medical Director for the Johns Hopkins Hospital's outpatient substance use treatment services. Dr. Olsen also serves as Vice President for the American Society of Addiction Medicine and is on the board of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence of Maryland. She is co-author of the book, "The Opioid Epidemic: What Everyone Needs to Know."