



ASAM American Society of
Addiction Medicine

June 1, 2021

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Washington, DC 20515

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U.S. House of Representatives
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Washington, D.C. 20515

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Dear Representatives Bustos, Cole, McGovern, and Mullin:

On behalf of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), a national medical specialty society representing more than 6,600 physicians and associated health professionals who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, thank you for your introduction of H.R. 2503, the Social Determinants Accelerator Act of 2021. ASAM strongly supports this critical legislation, which would create (1) an inter-agency technical advisory council on social determinants of health (SDOH) to help overcome barriers to coordinating services across sectors and (2) a new federal grant program to assist state, local, and Tribal governments in tackling persistent economic and social conditions that impact the prevention and treatment of chronic medical conditions, including addiction.

ASAM [defines addiction](#) as a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences.ⁱ Most recently, in ASAM's [Public Policy Statement on Advancing Racial Justice in Addiction Medicine](#),ⁱⁱ ASAM reiterated that social and economic factors can influence substance use and addiction and contribute to racial health disparities. Indeed, ASAM members have long understood that nonmedical factors impact the health outcomes and wellbeing of people suffering with addiction, as demonstrated in [The ASAM Criteria](#), ASAM's nationally recognized guidelines for addiction treatment.

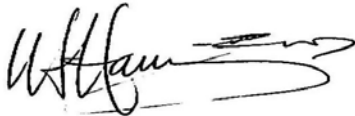
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The ASAM Criteria is the nation's most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for placement, continued stay, and transfer/discharge of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions. With *The ASAM Criteria*, a patient's treatment plan is developed through a multidimensional assessment that includes six dimensions. More specifically, Dimension 6 explores the patient's recovery or living situation, and surrounding people, places and things. In Dimension 6, clinicians assess a patient's need for nonmedical services such as housing, transportation, finances, education, childcare, and vocation.

Relatedly, your legislation would provide much-needed technical assistance and federal resources to help grantees navigate and coordinate fragmented and complex programs addressing matters like food insecurity, housing instability, workforce supports, and transportation reliability. In addition, grantees' SDOH accelerator plans would be required to target groups of high-need Medicaid patients – groups that often face the brunt of the nation's addiction and overdose crisis. This requirement is particularly important since Medicaid is the largest payer of addiction treatment and recovery services in the country.ⁱⁱⁱ Further, key provisions in your legislation that (1) charge the inter-agency council with identifying federal authorities and opportunities for improving coordination of federal programs and (2) require grantees' SDOH accelerator plans to identify key outcomes to be achieved and to measure the impact of interventions are critical to identifying best practices and generating additional evidence about improving health outcomes.

For all of these reasons, ASAM is deeply appreciative of your leadership on this legislation. We stand ready to work with you to support its passage. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kelly Corredor, ASAM's Chief Advocacy Officer, at kcorredor@asam.org.

Sincerely,



William Haning III, MD, DLFAPA, DFASAM
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine

ⁱ ASAM Definition of Addiction, September 2019,

<https://www.asam.org/Quality-Science/definition-of-addiction>

ⁱⁱ ASAM Public Policy Statement on Advancing Racial Justice in Addiction Medicine, February 2021,

<https://www.asam.org/advocacy/find-a-policy-statement/view-policy-statement/public-policy-statements/2021/02/26/public-policy-statement-on-advancing-racial-justice-in-addiction-medicine>

ⁱⁱⁱ Medicaid's Role in Improving Substance Use Disorder Treatment,

<https://www.milbank.org/publications/medicaids-role-in-improving-substance-use-disorder-treatment-in-the-us/#:~:text=As%20the%20nation's%20largest%20payer,commercially%20insured%20and%20Medicare%20populations.>