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Addiction Medicine

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June 13, 2017

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman  
United States Senate  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
United States Senate  
713 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Angus King  
United States Senate  
133 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Durbin, Portman, Brown, Collins, Capito, Manchin,  
King, and Booker,

On behalf of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the nation's oldest and largest medical specialty society representing more than 4,300 physicians and allied health professionals who specialize in the treatment of addiction, I am writing to offer our support for your bill, the Medicaid Coverage for Addiction Recovery Treatment Act, which would lift the Medicaid Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion for mental health and substance use disorder residential treatment facilities.

ASAM has long contended that the repeal of the IMD exclusion is essential for ensuring access to medically necessary non-hospital-based acute care and extended care residential services to treat addiction. The IMD exclusion is a statutory provision enacted in 1965 at the creation of Medicaid. The exclusion was created in an

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The Honorable Joe Manchin  
United States Senate  
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effort to avoid burdening Medicaid with financing care in large non-federal facilities and to avoid having federal dollars pay for long-term treatment or “warehousing” of patients with mental disorders in state hospitals or nursing homes. At its inception, the IMD exclusion was well intended, but as evidence-based treatment for addiction has progressed and become available, the provision now serves as a major obstacle for patients by denying coverage for treatment except in hospitals with fewer than 16 psychiatric beds. This prevents the treatment of patients using Medicaid dollars in cost-effective public or private specialty facilities that have evolved using the levels of care detailed in *The ASAM Criteria; Treatment Criteria for Addictive, Substance-Related, and Co-Occurring Conditions*.

In addition to repealing the IMD exclusion, your legislation will also mandate periodic review of ongoing need for mental health and SUD treatment and institutes accreditation standards for residential facilities that offer mental health and SUD treatment. ASAM is pleased that the review of ongoing need for treatment aligns with *The ASAM Criteria*. This will help to ensure that addiction treatment facilities are evaluating patient need for treatment using evidence-based and patient-centered metrics. ASAM recommends that, in addition to the review of ongoing need for treatment, the accreditation standards for residential SUD treatment facilities also align with the *ASAM Criteria*. The utilization of the *ASAM Criteria* for accreditation purposes would certify that accredited SUD treatment facilities are offering efficient and effective care.

ASAM thanks you for your leadership on this important issue. Repealing the IMD exclusion is critical to improving access to addiction treatment and we are pleased to endorse your legislation. We look forward to working closely with you to secure its passage.

Sincerely,

Kelly Clark, MD, MBA, DFASAM  
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine