



# Colorado Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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March 23, 2021

The Honorable Rhonda Fields  
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
200 East Colfax Avenue Room 357  
Denver, CO, 80203

Re: Support for SB21-137

Dear Chair Fields and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

On behalf of the Colorado Society of Addiction Medicine (COSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Colorado who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, we would like to take this opportunity to provide our support SB21-137, which takes important steps to strengthen addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts in Colorado. Additionally, this bill would place requirements on managed care organizations (MCOs) which would reduce barriers to treatment. With opioid-involved deaths surging in Colorado, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>i</sup> now more than ever, it is vital that Coloradans have access to robust addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

This bill would extend funding for a variety of critical public health programs in the state. One provision would extend the duration of the pilot program established in Colorado Revised Statutes 23-21-804 through fiscal year 2023. This program significantly improved access to addiction treatment in two underserved counties.<sup>ii</sup> Another key provision reappropriates funding for an initiative by the center for research into substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery support strategies to provide continuing education and training to clinicians and law enforcement on a variety of issues including addiction treatment and the use of opioid antagonists for opioid overdoses. Additionally, this legislation would make permanent the substance use disorder treatment capacity in underserved communities grant program. Extending the duration of these programs will improve health outcomes and save lives.

Furthermore, this legislation would make significant progress towards removing barriers to care by changing insurance policy. By requiring that MCOs respond to authorization requests within 24 hours, and that they provide a specific justification for each denial of continued authorization for all six dimensions of the *the ASAM Criteria*, this bill would bring much needed efficiency and transparency to the authorization process. Additionally, by establishing a minimum number of days for which an MCO can authorize intensive residential treatment and transitional residential treatment, this bill would make progress in ensuring that patients are not authorized for insufficient durations of stay when seeking those levels of care. Finally, by requiring that an MCO authorize services in accordance with the clinician's recommendations even if those recommendations conflict with the MCO's determination, this bill would save lives by preventing fatal lapses or changes to the treatment of those suffering from the chronic, deadly disease of addiction.

COSAM applauds the introduction of this legislation, and believes that it will improve the public health by extending funding for prevention, treatment, and recovery programs in the state, as well as by combating burdensome insurance practices. Please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Joshua Blum at [Joshua.Blum@dhha.org](mailto:Joshua.Blum@dhha.org), if COSAM can be of any service to you. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Joshua Blum, MD, FASAM  
President, the Colorado Society of Addiction Medicine

CC:

The Honorable Joann Ginal  
The Honorable Janet Buckner  
The Honorable Sonya Jaquez Lewis  
The Honorable Barb Kirkmeyer  
The Honorable Cleave Simpson  
The Honorable Jim Smallwood

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<sup>i</sup> American Medical Association. (2020). "Issue brief: Reports of increases in opioid- and other drug-related overdose and other concerns during COVID pandemic." Available at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-12/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Expand Medication-assisted Treatment Pilot Program of 2019, S.B. 19-001, 77nd Cong. §1 (2019). Available at: [http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019A/bills/2019a\\_001\\_01.pdf](http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019A/bills/2019a_001_01.pdf)