



# Utah Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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Javier Ballester Gonzalez, MD

The Honorable Brad M. Daw  
350 North State Street  
State Capitol, Suite 350  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

January 27, 2020

Dear Representative Daw:

On behalf of the Utah Society of Addiction Medicine (UTSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Utah who specialize in the treatment of addiction, we write to thank you for the introduction of and offer our support to HB38, which would incentivize practitioners to provide addiction treatment in correctional facilities and require the state to pursue a state plan amendment to allow Medicaid pre-enrollment for certain inmates. These policy innovations will increase access to care for vulnerable Utahns and increase the likelihood that formerly incarcerated individuals will have access to treatment and reach recovery.

UTSAM is dedicated to increasing access to and improving the quality of addiction treatment for all patients in Utah, including those in criminal justice settings. To that end, we are committed to advocating for a state addiction treatment system that provides and expands access to all FDA-approved medications for addiction treatment (MAT) in correctional facilities. Those receiving MAT are 75% less likely to experience a mortality related to addiction than those not receiving MAT, and are more likely to maintain gainful employment.<sup>i</sup> MAT has also been shown to reduce recidivism, illegal drug overdose deaths, and infectious disease transmission both inside correctional settings and in the community.<sup>ii</sup> By creating a refundable tax credit for practitioners who provide substance use disorder treatment, including MAT, in correctional settings, this bill will ensure that more people have access to life-saving treatment for addiction, increasing their odds of survival and successful community reintegration.

UTSAM also commends the requirement that the Department of Health pursue a plan waiver to allow certain inmates to enroll in Medicaid prior to leaving a correctional facility. The weeks following release from jail or prison are a particularly dangerous time for individuals with addiction. In one study, formerly incarcerated individuals were 40 times more likely to die of an opioid overdose in the first two weeks after being released from prison than a person in the general population.<sup>iii</sup> Pre-enrollment in Medicaid will help formerly incarcerated individuals more easily obtain and maintain treatment following release, decreasing the likelihood that these individuals will fall victim to relapse and overdose. We thank you for pursuing innovative policy solutions to save the lives of Utahns with addiction and we offer our strong support for this bill.

UTSAM shares the state of Utah's goal of providing access to high-quality, evidence-based and addiction treatment to Utahns in and outside of correctional settings. We offer our strong support for this bill and thank you for its introduction. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [katiecarlson801@gmail.com](mailto:katiecarlson801@gmail.com) or 801-599-2785 if UTSAM can be of assistance with this bill or others to address the state's opioid

addiction and overdose crisis. Thank you for your dedication to the health and safety of Utahns with addiction – we look forward to collaborating with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Katherine Carlson, MD, FASAM  
President – Utah Society of Addiction Medicine



Paula Cook, MD  
President Elect-Utah Society of Addiction Medicine



Javier Ballester, MD  
Secretary-Utah Society of Addiction Medicine



Amy de la Garza, MD  
Legislative Chair-Utah Society of Addiction Medicine

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<sup>i</sup> Legal Action Center (2015). Confronting an Epidemic: The Case for Eliminating Barriers to Medication Assisted Treatment of Heroin and Opioid Addiction. Washington, D.C: Legal Action Center. Available at <https://lac.org/resources/substance-use-resources/medication-assisted-treatment-resources/case-for-eliminating-barriers-to-medication-assisted-treatment-of-heroin-and-opioid-addiction/>

<sup>ii</sup> Treatment Research Institute (TRI), Ed. "Cost & Utilization Outcomes of Opioid- Dependence Treatment." American Journal of Managed Care 2011. Available at [https://www.ajmc.com/journals/supplement/2011/a369\\_june11/a369\\_11jun\\_alcohol\\_s235to48](https://www.ajmc.com/journals/supplement/2011/a369_june11/a369_11jun_alcohol_s235to48)

<sup>iii</sup> University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health. Former inmates at high risk for opioid overdose following prison release. Available at: <https://sph.unc.edu/sph-news/former-inmates-at-high-risk-for-opioid-overdose-following-prison-release/>.