

# Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act

(S. 2074/H.R. 2482)

**BOTTOM LINE** **Removing regulatory hurdles to medication-assisted treatment will reduce Americans' unmet need for addiction treatment.**

**REQUEST** **Co-sponsor the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act (S. 2074/H.R. 2482)**

New bipartisan legislation would expand access to medication-assisted treatment for millions of Americans living with addiction. The **Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act** (MAT) (S. 2074/H.R. 2482) would remove the waiver requirement for health care providers to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder. The MAT Act was introduced by Representatives Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), Antonio Delgado (D-N.Y.), Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), Ted Budd (R-N.C.), Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.) and Mike Turner (R-OH) in the House and by Senators Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Dan Sullivan (R-AK).

**Why do we need the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act?**

**The number of Americans with addiction continues to grow and more must be done to curb the overdose epidemic.** According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), approximately 20 million Americans aged 12 or older have experienced a substance use disorder, yet nearly 90 percent of people living with addiction do not receive any form of treatment in a given year.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost 400,000 people died from an overdose involving any opioid between 1999-2017. These numbers threaten to continue increasing if quick action is not taken to reverse the trend.

**The current waiver deters providers from treating individuals with addiction.** Buprenorphine has been used as a safe and effective medication for individuals living with substance use disorder for more than 20 years. Currently, prescribers must apply for a special waiver to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid



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use disorder, a hurdle that deters providers from offering buprenorphine and results in limited treatment access. With just over 70,000 buprenorphine-waived prescribers, there are not enough prescribers to meet Americans' needs. The MAT Act would remove a major hurdle to prescribing, thereby increasing the number of providers able to provide medication-assisted treatment.

**Removing the burdensome waiver requirement would have great impact in rural areas.** Access to medication-assisted treatment is currently extremely low in rural areas, with very few waived providers who can provide access to this evidence-based treatment. Recent studies have also called attention to distressing disparities in access to buprenorphine in minority communities, an issue that this bill has the potential to address by removing barriers to providers that serve diverse populations.<sup>ii</sup>

**The MAT Act ensures parity of prescribing medications for addiction treatment and opioid use disorder.** Waiver requirements do not exist for clinicians licensed to prescribe opiates or other addiction and mental health medications. Medical professionals can prescribe buprenorphine for pain management without having to clear this regulatory hurdle. This bill is a vital part of a comprehensive solution to ending the rising rate of opioid overdoses by increasing access to life-saving treatment.

<sup>i</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.openminds.com/market-intelligence/news/white-populations-35-times-more-likely-to-receive-buprenorphine-prescriptions-than-non-whites/>

