



Jeff Richardson, MBA, LCSW-C, Board Chair
Charles Ingoglia, MSW, President and CEO

June 13, 2019

The Honorable Paul Tonko
U.S. House of Representatives
2369 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Tonko:

On behalf of the National Council for Behavioral Health and our 3,000 community mental health and addiction treatment member organizations, I am writing to thank you for authoring the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act of 2019 (H.R. 2482), and for taking the time to speak with our Board of Directors to share your passion for the issue. Your bill is critical for increasing access to life saving addiction treatment, which is an important step in helping to turn the tide on the national opioid epidemic.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, almost 22 million Americans aged 12 or older have experienced a substance use disorder, yet only 1 in every 10 people living with addiction receives any form of treatment in a given year. 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 we do not act quickly to reverse the trend.

By removing major hurdles to prescribe buprenorphine and requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to launch a national educational campaign, the MAT Act will help to bridge the gap between Americans' dire need for addiction treatment services and the availability of those services. Removing the burdensome waiver requirement for buprenorphine prescribing would have an especially important impact in rural areas where access to MAT is currently extremely low, and may help to curb disparities to accessing this medication for minority communities. Providing access to medication-assisted treatment is one of many vital steps necessary to begin stemming the rising rate of opioid overdose deaths, and your bill is an important piece of a comprehensive solution.

Thank you for your dedication to expanding access to lifesaving treatment for millions of Americans living with substance use disorders. The National Council looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to see this important legislation through to passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Ingoglia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles Ingoglia, MSW
President and CEO
National Council for Behavioral Health