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**Comprehensive Insurance Coverage is Critical to Stemming Opioid Crisis
*Addiction Experts Oppose BCRA***

Our nation's escalating opioid crisis – with more than 144 people dying every day from overdose – will not abate without access to comprehensive substance use disorder treatment in private insurance and Medicaid. The Senate's version of healthcare repeal would massively undermine national efforts to address this public health epidemic.

No time-limited infusion of federal dollars for addiction treatment can fill the gaping coverage and financing holes, meet the unmet need for substance use treatment, or prevent the significant disruption in health care delivery that will result under the enactment of the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA).

Research has clearly shown that substance use disorders are complex, chronic medical conditions, best treated with comprehensive and integrated care. Until the passage of the Affordable Care Act, substance use disorders were financed and treated separately from the rest of healthcare, largely through government funded block grants. This produced a truly segregated, seriously under-resourced system that contributed to the current addiction epidemic in this country and perpetuated discrimination.

Separate funding to address the opioid crisis will not meet the overarching healthcare needs of patients struggling with addiction, who often have numerous co-occurring health problems that must also be addressed. It will not adequately support prevention for SUDs, nor the long-term recovery management that is indicated for chronic medical illnesses.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that BCRA would cut Medicaid funding by \$772 billion, as the bill would impose caps on federal Medicaid funds and end the Medicaid expansion. These changes would mean that millions of people with substance use disorders would lose coverage for lifesaving treatment. Approximately half of Medicaid enrollees have substance use or mental health disorders, and Medicaid pays for approximately 30% of the cost of medications to treat addiction. Countless people who are currently in treatment and on the road to recovery would lose access to the critical services needed to maintain their health. The rate of opioid fatality would sharply rise.

The BCRA will end significant progress in creating a stable and sustainable financing structure for substance use treatment through Medicaid and private insurance, stripping away addiction coverage from millions of Americans who desperately need it. Further, it would reinstate discriminatory coverage of substance use treatment by allowing states to waive such benefits in Essential Health Benefit-based plans and reinstate underwriting for pre-existing conditions making coverage for addiction treatment unaffordable for many Americans.

The Senate healthcare repeal plan, which would leave 22 million Americans uninsured, is untenable. It will be particularly devastating to millions of Americans who have complex or pre-existing conditions, including substance use disorders. If enacted, the BCRA would undercut our national efforts to stem the opioid crisis, dramatically cutting funding for critical life-saving treatments.

The undersigned individuals and institutions represent leaders in the field of addiction care, research and policy. **We urge Congress to reject this harmful legislation. The devastation caused by the Senate bill will not be ameliorated by a short-term infusion of grant funding to address the opioid epidemic.**

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