

Good morning,

My name is Brett Lechleitner, I am the President of PATOD (Pennsylvania Association for the Treatment of Opiate Dependence). PATOD represents 43 of the approximately 76 licensed Narcotic Treatment Programs in Pennsylvania. I am also the Regional Director for Acadia healthcare which covers 9 MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) programs across Eastern Pennsylvania. I have over 17 years of experience working in MAT programs. Our MAT programs consist of Methadone Maintenance, Buprenorphine, and Vivatrol as well as Drug free programs which include IOP.

Our facilities are licensed by the Department of Drug & Alcohol Program Licensing and accredited by JACHO or CARF. In addition, OTP's receive regulation oversight at the federal level by the DEA and CSAT. Most receive inspection and oversight by their respective County SCA's and Health Choices contractors, as well. Program quality is thus closely scrutinized at multiple levels.

As I am sure you are aware, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of accidental death in America. Opioid pain relievers pose an increasingly dangerous threat to public health and safety, and do so at an epidemic proportion. Heroin dependence and use has more than doubled in just ten years.

Despite this reality, and the horrific toll this epidemic has levied against individuals, families, community based human service agencies, criminal justice agencies, and businesses within our communities a documented, evidence based, and effective medical response (MAT) is tragically underutilized.

I would like to thank you, for providing me with the opportunity to testify today about the current proposed consolidation of the Departments into a unified Department of Health and Human Services. Although we are neither for or against the consolidation of the departments we want to ensure the work that we have initiated with DDAP and Secretary Tennis over the prior years are not lost in the transition.

Our membership feels that over the prior years under Secretary Tennis, MAT programs have started to get a seat at the table when treatment and funding options are discussed. There have been improvements with removing barriers to treatment and some ability to address some regulatory burdens through obtaining exceptions thru DDAP. There has been representation from DDAP at our quarterly meetings which has not occurred prior to the Secretary position. PATOD has been included on multiple initiative which include the HR 590 hearings, regulatory discussions, and others. Our concern is that through a consolidation does our presence in these initiatives cease.

I wanted to take some time today to discuss some of the barriers that we face today and ask how these issues would be handled within a consolidated department. Has a separate department received more focus and timely approval for new Programs or do you see a consolidated department streamlining this process. Currently this continues to be an issue raised by our membership as we continue to get feedback that capacity requests are not

completed within appropriate time frames which in turn forces facilities to hold off on admitting a patient pending approval.

Some other major barriers we hope to pursue are addressing overly burdensome regulations that are outdated, inadequate rates for services, eliminating barriers which impede access to treatment, addressing the lack of funding from SCA'S for MAT treatment, and addressing stigma our facilities and patients experience. These are some of the same issues that PATOD and MAT programs across the state have been working to address for as long as I can remember. Does the consolidation of the departments allow for these issues and others to receive the focus they require?

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of PATOD and our patients. We appreciate all of the attention and action to address this deadly and tragic Epidemic within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Nation. I hope that we can continue our fight to meet the needs of our community members and restore the balance to their lives and that of our communities.

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