January 3, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell                The Honorable Paul Ryan
Senate Majority Leader                        Speaker of the House
United State Senate                           United States Congress
Washington, DC 20510                          Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer                  The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader                            Democratic Leader
S-221, The Capitol                            H-204, The Capitol
United States Senate                         United States Congress
Washington, DC 20515                          Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, and the American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine, we thank you for your leadership regarding the recently enacted 21st Century Cures Act, which contained important mental health and substance use disorder reforms as well as critical funds to address the opioid misuse and overdose epidemic. We are writing to ask that as Congress contemplates health insurance market reforms, any changes to the healthcare system preserve access to appropriate services and programs for individuals and families struggling with addiction and mental illness.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) is a national medical specialty society representing more than 36,500 physician members who specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and research of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) is a professional society representing more than 4,300 physicians, clinicians, and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction.

The American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) is a national professional organization composed of psychiatrists, faculty, medical students, residents and fellows, non-psychiatrists and related health professionals, caring for those with substance use disorders and co-occurring mental disorders through education and training health professionals, influencing and promoting excellence in practice, policy, and prevention. AAAP is the lead organization of a coalition of national professional organizations
for two SAMHSA-funded grants—Providers’ Clinical Support System for Opioid Therapies and Providers’ Clinical Support System for Medication Assisted Treatment, addressing the opioid use disorder epidemic.

The American Osteopathic Association of Addiction Medicine (AOAAM) is the subspecialty of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) organization that represents the interests of osteopathic physicians involved in the treatment of alcoholism and substance use disorder. The osteopathic profession makes up 8% of physicians in the U.S., however, because of the emphasis on family practice, it is estimated 20% of primary care in this country is delivered by osteopathic physicians.

In the face of the opioid overdose and suicide epidemics, equitable access to a full continuum of mental health and substance use disorder treatment services, including medications to treat addiction and mental illness, must be an essential component of healthcare coverage. It is also critical that addiction and mental illness be covered on par with other medical conditions, ensuring full implementation of parity and patient safeguards consistent with the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, and extensions of this law, and expanded coverage provided, under the Affordable Care Act.

Ensuring Americans have access to addiction and mental health treatment is not only the right thing to do – it’s the cost-effective thing to do, yielding a return on investment that will benefit employers and our economy. For example, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, every dollar spent on the treatment of mental illness results in $3 - $5 in new economic contributions and years of healthy life. In addition, the recent Surgeon General Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health found that every $1 spent on addiction treatment saves $4 in health care costs and $7 in criminal justice costs.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that recent gains made toward improving access to addiction and mental health treatment will be preserved and enhanced as reforms are considered for both the health insurance market and Medicaid program in the next Congress.

Sincerely,

R. Jeffrey Goldsmith, MD, DLFAPA, DFASAM
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine

Maria A. Oquendo, MD, PhD
President, American Psychiatric Association

John A. Renner, MD
President, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry

William Bograkos, DO, FACOEP, FACOFP
President, American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine
CC
The Honorable Orrin Hatch
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Lamar Alexander
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Kevin Brady
The Honorable Richard Neal