

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the nearly 74 million Americans currently living with a mental illness or battling addiction, we thank you for the Committee's attention to policy opportunities to address the nation's mental health and addiction crises.

To date, Congressional efforts to combat the opioid crisis have provided resources to communities, first responders, and patients dealing with an opioid use disorder. Relatively little focus has centered on opportunities to prevent opioid addiction, where possible. One way to prevent opioid addiction is to minimize exposure to narcotics by making available other, non-opioid based pain management approaches. Doing so can prevent opioid misuse in the nearly 4 million Americans who initiate long-term opioid use every year after a routine surgical procedure.

With these patients and opportunity in mind, **we urge the Committee to include the Non-Opioids Prevent Addiction in the Nation ("NOPAIN") Act (S. 586) in the mental health legislative package currently under development.**

Rates of mental health and addiction are on the rise. More than one in five adults – nearly 53 million Americans – experienced a mental illness in 2020. On top of this, there are currently 22 million Americans living with a substance use disorder and an additional 23 million Americans in recovery. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute for Drug Abuse, rates of drug use and addiction have also increased during the pandemic. As a result, we lost more than 75,000 Americans to an opioid related drug overdose last year. This means more than 200 Americans die every day from an opioid-related overdose.

Reining in these skyrocketing rates of mental illness and addiction is critically important. In tackling this challenge, we must take a comprehensive approach. Such an approach would ensure that those living with mental illness or battling addiction can access needed care as well as take steps to prevent mental illness and addiction.

We appreciate your commitment to addressing the nation's mental health and addiction crises. We are committed to working with you and the rest of the committee on enacting a legislative package that can meaningfully improve the state of mental health in the country.

Of course, if you have any questions or if we can be of any further assistance to you or the committee during this process, please reach out to Chris Fox – the Executive Director at Voices for Non-Opioid Choices – at chris@nonopioidchoices.org.

Sincerely,

A Voice in the Wilderness Empowerment Center
A.C.T. Drug Free Community Coalition
Adult & Teen Challenge
Ambulatory Surgery Center Association
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Massage Therapy Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Psychological Association
Aurora Sober Living
Beyond Addiction Mosaic
Center of Addiction & Faith
Chatham Drug Free
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Cory's Cause
Cover2 Resources
Culpeper Overdose Awareness
Drug Free America Foundation, Inc.
Edwina Martin House
Flourish Bakery
Friends of Guest House
Herren Project
Jamie Daniels Foundation
Journey House Foundation
Ketchikan Wellness Coalition
Mental Health Association in Delaware
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Association of Social Workers
National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Rural Health Association
National Safety Council
National Transitions of Care Coalition
Overdose Lifeline
Partnership to End Addiction
Physical Medicine Management Alliance
REAL LIFE
Reckless Saints of Nowhere

Save Our Society From Drugs
SeekHealing
Society for Opioid Free Anesthesia
Society of Behavioral Medicine
South End - Roxbury Community Partnership
Steele County Safe & Drug-Free Coalition
The Kennedy Forum
The West Warwick Prevention Coalition
Voices for Awareness Foundation
Voices for Non-Opioid Choices
Warren Coalition
Will Bright Foundation
Young People in Recovery