

New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
Innovating for Progress|Partnering for Solutions

February 7, 2019

The Honorable Joseph F. Vitale, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
569 Rahway Ave.
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

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Testimony on S3314

“Requires DHS to ensure medication assisted treatment benefits under Medicaid program are provided without the imposition of prior authorization requirements.”

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA), I wish to thank Chairman Vitale, Vice-chair Madden and other members of the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 3314. NJAMHAA and its members strongly support the goal of this bill which is to ensure that prior authorization requirements do not delay the provision of life-saving medication assisted treatment (MAT).

We are extremely grateful to the sponsors for the amendments that have been made to S3314 to include individuals whose treatment is supported by state funds, as well as the addition of language to capture any medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for substance use treatment, precluding any need to revisit the statute in the future when new medications are developed.

We do have one major concern that remains. The bill as written redefines MAT as solely prescribing medications for the treatment of substance use disorder, when, in fact, MAT is an evidence-based practice that consists of counseling and behavioral therapies along with medication. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines MAT on their website as “the use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies for the treatment of substance use disorders.” And the FDA, on their website, defines MAT similarly as: “the use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies.”

NJAMHAA recommends either correcting the definition or deleting it. The bill can address pre-authorizations for medications without mentioning or defining MAT.

NJAMHAA will continue to work with the sponsors and the Administration to support improved access to medication assisted treatment. We support the bill



moving forward; however, the MAT definition must now be corrected in order to maintain the integrity of the provision of this evidence-based treatment.

As always, NJAMHAA remains available to address any questions you may have regarding this bill or other behavioral health issues. Please feel free to contact me at 609-838-5488, extension 292 or at dwentz@njamhaa.org.

Sincerely,



Debra L. Wentz, PhD
President and CEO

