

October 27, 2016

The Honorable John J. Burzichelli  
Assembly Appropriations Committee  
935 Kings Highway  
Suite 400  
West Deptford, NJ 08086

**Testimony in support of A1833**

Dear Chairman Burzichelli and Members of the Committee:

I want to thank Chairman Burzichelli, Vice-Chairman Lagana and the other members of the Committee for the opportunity to offer comments in support of Assembly Bill 1833, which would mandate health benefits coverage for opioid analgesics with abuse-deterrent properties. NJMAHAA also thanks Committee member Assemblyman Conaway for sponsoring this bill, and for his understanding of the importance of this issue.

NJAMHAA represents 160 non-profit hospital-based and free standing community mental health and substance use treatment providers throughout the state. Collectively, our member organizations help 500,000 children and adults with mental health and addiction issues annually and employ a significant segment of the state's workforce.

Assembly Bill 1833 requires health insurance companies to include opioid analgesics with abuse deterrent formulations (ADF) on their formularies and to provide coverage for these medications with co-pays at the same levels as for non-abuse deterrent opioids. ADF medications cannot be crushed, injected or otherwise altered to achieve a high. This technology prevents misuse and abuse of opioids and is, therefore, an effective strategy for addressing the epidemic that is causing significant health, economic and societal consequences.

The bill also stipulates that patients must not be required to first fail on non-abuse deterrent opioids before being prescribed ADF medications. The legislation does not require a doctor to prescribe an abuse-deterrent opioid,

prevent a patient from receiving a non-abuse deterrent opioid or promote the use or prescribing of more opioids.

The problem of opioid misuse, abuse and addiction has far reaching effects not only on individuals, families and communities; it also has a significant impact on state spending in the areas of Medicaid, Criminal Justice and Substance Abuse Treatment Services, among others. It is critical to be proactive in striving to prevent addictions from developing to reduce both the personal and fiscal impact on New Jersey residents. Passing this legislation is one positive step toward achieving this goal.

I thank the Committee members for the opportunity to support this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee. Please feel free to contact me at 609-838-5488 extension 292 or at [dwentz@njamhaa.org](mailto:dwentz@njamhaa.org).

Sincerely,

Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D.  
President and Chief Executive Officer