



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

April 4, 2019

Rep. Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Markwayne Mullin
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Reps. Blumenauer and Mullin:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic hospitals, nursing homes, indigent care clinics, long-term care facilities, systems, sponsors, and related organizations serving the full continuum of health care across our nation, I am writing to thank you for introducing the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act. This bipartisan legislation would modernize patient privacy protections by aligning current regulations for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment with HIPAA standards for the purposes of treatment, payment and health care operations. The legislation also strengthens consumer protections by incorporating anti-discrimination language and enhancing penalties for any breach of a patient's substance use record.

Catholic health providers recognize that each human life is sacred and possesses inalienable worth, and that health care is essential to promoting and protecting the inherent dignity of every individual. We also recognize that supportive and readily available SUD treatments are essential facets of holistic, person-centered and effective health care. The first principle in our *Vision for U.S. Health Care* affirms our call to pay special attention to those most likely to lack access to health care, many of whom are in desperate need of SUD services. This commitment is why the Catholic health ministry strongly supports efforts to increase access to these services and ensure that they become fully integrated into our health care system.

By aligning current regulations for SUD treatment records with existing patient protections under HIPAA, your legislation will help to facilitate treatment for this vulnerable population in Catholic facilities. For health providers, the alignment of SUD records with other medical records is essential to providing whole-person care. It enables the essential flow of patient information among providers that is critical to the timely and effective delivery of health care as well as being critical to patient safety and quality.

Thank you again for introducing the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act, and we look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important bipartisan legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO