

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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October 2, 2017

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AG Balderas Calls on Congress to Make Drug Treatment More Affordable and Accessible

“Road to Recovery” Act Will Make Drug Treatment Options More Available to New Mexico Residents

Albuquerque, NM – This morning, Attorney General Hector Balderas, with a bipartisan coalition of 39 Attorneys General and the National Association of Attorneys General, called on Congress to pass legislation that changes federal law to make treatment for drug addiction more affordable and accessible for Americans who most need it.

“New Mexico’s families, economy, law enforcement and healthcare system are in crisis due to the opioid and heroin emergency ravaging our state, and we lack the resources to adequately respond,” said Attorney General Balderas. “That is why Congress must make drug treatment, specifically for opioid and heroin addiction, affordable for working New Mexico families. The ‘Road to Recovery’ Act will help those struggling with addiction gain access to treatment, and eliminate a decades-old Medicaid rule that limits residential treatment options.”

HR 2938 is the “Road to Recovery” Act. Attorney General Balderas and the coalition of Attorneys General sent a letter to the U.S. House of Representatives, describing the national epidemic of heroin and opioid abuse and overdose deaths, and stating: “We cannot arrest our way out of this problem, because it is not just a public safety challenge – it is a public health challenge as well.”

The “Road to Recovery” Act will help increase access to treatment for opioid addiction by removing a more than 50-year-old provision in the Medicaid program that currently acts as a barrier to residential addiction treatment.

The bill addresses the “Institutions for Mental Diseases” (IMD) exclusion which was created in the original 1965 Medicaid legislation to prevent the funding of large, residential mental health facilities. While the exclusion led to the closure of what were, in many cases, inhumane institutions, it now has the unintended effect of limiting Medicaid funding for residential treatment facilities, which can be one of the most effective ways to treat drug addiction.

The “Road to Recovery” Act will remove the exclusion for addiction treatment facilities only. This will help open new avenues for addiction treatment while maintaining appropriate restrictions on mental health facilities.

The change in the law is supported by health care providers, insurers, treatment centers, governors of both political parties and the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis.

Please see attached for a copy of the letter that was sent today.

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October 2nd, 2017

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Kansas Attorney General

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Hon. Frank Pallone
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Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

As state attorneys general, our offices are on the frontlines of the opioid epidemic. We write today in bipartisan support of HR 2938 (“Road to Recovery Act”), which will expand a key tool in this battle.

America’s opioid crisis is getting dramatically worse. A recent study indicates that drug overdoses claimed as many as 65,000 American lives in 2016, a 24 percent increase from the year before. We fight this battle every day, arresting drug dealers and sweeping illegal drugs off the streets to keep them out of our communities.

But we cannot arrest our way out of this problem, because it is not just a public safety challenge—it is a public health challenge as well. People often develop opioid addiction through prescribed medical usage, with no intent by the patient to engage in abusive behavior, simply because of the addictive properties of opioid drugs. Drug addiction is a disease, not a crime. If we truly want to end this crisis, we need to focus on its root causes, including a lack of treatment for those suffering from addiction.

HR 2938 will remove an unnecessary restriction on Medicaid funding for in-patient drug treatment. The restriction is a holdover from the original 1965 Medicaid law that was intended to discourage the use of inhumane and ineffective state-run asylums. The bill will remove this restriction for drug treatment while appropriately keeping it in place for mental health institutions. This change has been called for by providers, the medical establishment, governors of both parties and the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis because it will make treatment affordable for those who need it, and create market incentives for new treatment resources. The bill also contains a provision to make it easier for children to access drug treatment.

If we have any hope of reversing this terrible trend, we need every treatment option at our disposal. Therefore, we respectfully ask you to work to ensure the passage of HR 2938 to help us fight this epidemic.

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Sincerely,



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Ohio Attorney General



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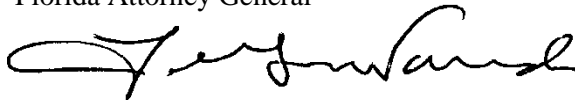
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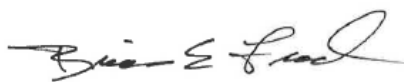
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Vermont Attorney General

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Schimel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brad" and last name "Schimel" clearly distinguishable.

Brad Schimel
Wisconsin Attorney General