



April 25, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Chairman
Health Subcommittee
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
Health Subcommittee
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Walden and Burgess and Ranking Members Pallone and Green:

On behalf of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) and the Personal Connected Health Alliance (PCHAlliance), we appreciate the Committee's work to develop and advance public policy and programs to address the nation's opioid crisis. We write today to express our support for the *Access to Telehealth Services for Opioid Use Disorders Act* (H.R. 5603), led by Representative Cardenas (D-CA) and Representative Matsui (D-CA), which is under consideration by the Committee. The provisions in this bill would help to address treatment needs of Medicare beneficiaries with opioid addiction by expanding access to care using evidence-based telehealth.

HIMSS is a global, cause-based, not-for-profit organization focused on better health through IT. In North America, HIMSS focuses on health IT thought leadership, education, market research, and media services. Founded in 1961, HIMSS encompasses more than 65,000 individuals, of which more than two-thirds work in healthcare provider, governmental, and not-for-profit organizations, plus over 640 corporations and 450 not-for-profit partner organizations, that share this cause.

PCHAlliance aims to make health and wellness an effortless part of daily life. The PCHAlliance, a non-profit organization formed by HIMSS, believes that health is personal and extends beyond healthcare. The Alliance mobilizes a coalition of stakeholders to realize the full potential of personal connected health. PCHAlliance members are a vibrant ecosystem of technology and life sciences industry icons and innovative, early stage companies along with governments, academic institutions, and associations from around the world.

PCHAlliance publishes and promotes adoption of the Continua Design Guidelines. Continua is recognized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as the international standard for safe, secure, and reliable exchange of data to and from personal health devices. PCHAlliance accelerates technical,

business, policy and social strategies necessary to advance personal connected health through its flagship Healthy Longevity Initiative to promote lifelong health and wellness.

For those who become addicted to opioids, substance abuse therapy is an essential part of treatment. And, as noted by CMS and HHS officials in recent testimony, telehealth is a vital part of the treatment solution. A recent review of evidence conducted by PCHAlliance notes promise for mental health services delivered via telehealth, as there are indications of both improved outcomes and access.¹ Further, according to a 2016 technical brief conducted by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality,

“There is sufficient evidence to support the effectiveness of telehealth for specific uses with some types of patients, including.... Psychotherapy as part of behavioral health.”²

Despite this evidence, traditional Medicare contains significant and extensive restrictions on the use of telehealth to deliver substance abuse services. It limits such services to beneficiaries living in specified rural geographies, uses an outdated and narrow definition of telehealth as real-time live audio and visual systems, and requires beneficiaries to travel to a certified clinical site.

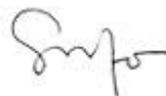
The *Access to Telehealth Services for Opioid Use Disorders Act* will help fix this problem. The Act gives the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to waive certain telehealth restrictions, for the purposes of treating an opioid use disorder, that have been found to save money, improve quality of care without increasing spending, or improve access to services. Passage of this bill or the inclusion of these legislative provisions in any Committee opioid crisis legislation will improve desperately needed addiction treatment for Medicare patients.

For the reasons above, we strongly support this bill and looking forward to working with you to enact this important piece of legislation. Thank you for all your work in helping address our nation’s ongoing opioid crisis.

Sincerely,



Carla Smith, MA, FHIMSS, CNM
Executive Vice President
HIMSS North America



Richard M. Scarfo
Vice President
Personal Connected Health Alliance

CC: The Honorable Doris Matsui
The Honorable Tony Cárdenas

¹ http://www.pchalliance.org/sites/pchalliance/files/PCHA_Evidence_Paper_FINAL_Web.pdf

² https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/telehealth_technical-brief.pdf, page vii.