



February 12, 2018

The Honorable Senator Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6200

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Dear Senator McConnell:

We would like to address the final query #8 on Senators Hatch and Wyden's request for feedback. The University of Kentucky has developed specific programs providing integrated care of mother and children afflicted by opioid use disorder. The PATHways program at the University of Kentucky is transdisciplinary incorporating specialists from Maternal Fetal Medicine, Addiction, Neonatology, Family Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work. PATHways has demonstrated a reduction in the rate of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome through evidence-based interventions.¹⁻⁴ We have recently hosted then Acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan and demonstrated our dedication to quality, effective healthcare for this population. Currently, the faculty is attempting to scale our program to reach out to more patients and practitioners in Appalachia, and is seeking funding support.

The PATHways program began as a grass-roots effort composed of dedicated individuals witnessing a disturbing transformation in our culture. Our goal has been and will continue to be to reach out without stigma or bias to all pregnant women across our Commonwealth and indeed, across the nation, to share information and effective therapies. The interventions we highlight are the need for maintenance therapy as an initial step toward recovery, group care models emphasizing prenatal care in addition to addiction treatment, case management, parenting, contraception, and violence reduction. We know such integrated treatment paradigms both during and after pregnancy can work. We also believe evidence demonstrates they are cost effective.⁵

Unlike past governmental efforts that have highlighted single individuals such as a drug czar, this senate finance committee has the opportunity to focus on work which can have a long-term influence. We suggest the creation of a National Center for Substance Use Research, Prevention, and Treatment Benefit for Women and Children (The CURB Women's and Children's Center) housed at the University of Kentucky. Longer term funding dedicated to a central location can synthesize and disseminate best practices generated from experts in areas such as pharmacology, women's care, substance use treatment, psychiatry, nursing, economics, social work, criminal justice, and neonatal/pediatric care. Pregnant and parenting women represent an important subpopulation that more readily interact with the healthcare

system, and can inform us of trends regarding substance use in our society. The purpose of any such Center will be to promote transdisciplinary, integrated care across systems of health care, justice, government, and education to address opioid use today and possibly provide more rapid nationwide response capabilities to epidemics in the future that may afflict women, the unborn, and children. A CURB Center can interface with organizations such as SAMHSA and CDC to surveil substance use in pregnancy, and NIDA to address research directions.

We therefore believe strategies exist to effectively combat this epidemic. As leaders of a healthcare system, one of our observed major obstacles is providing resources and guidance to assist patients and providers to promptly and effectively translate treatment strategies into action in other locales. Our program is based on teamwork provided by dedicated individuals who utilize the best current therapies while researching new interventions. Unfortunately, we know the present epidemic will impact Americans far longer than we now appreciate as it has dramatically adversely influenced the course of pregnancy for too many Americans and will thus impact our next generation. We strive for better, long term solutions.

Sincerely,



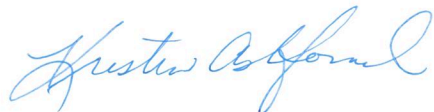
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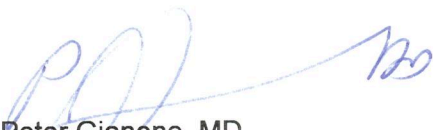
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