



# Pennsylvania Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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October 21, 2024

The Honorable Joe Pittman  
Majority Leader  
Pennsylvania Senate  
Senate Box 203041  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3041  
Room: 350 Main Capitol

**Re: PSAM's Support for HB 1515, Helping County Jails Establish and Expand Medication Treatments for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) Programs**

Dear Majority Leader Pittman,

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Society of Addiction Medicine (PSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Pennsylvania specializing in the prevention and treatment of addiction, thank you for your attention to this important issue. **We write today to express our strong support for HB 1515.** HB 1515 is bipartisan legislation that would expand grant funding for county jails to establish programs providing all forms of Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD). The grant currently only covers naltrexone. **Simply put, this legislation would save lives, reduce recidivism, and improve health outcomes for persons with opioid addiction in Pennsylvania.**

MOUD is an evidence-based treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD), demonstrated to improve outcomes for patients with this condition, including increasing retention in treatment and lowering illicit drug use and criminal behavior.<sup>1</sup> This form of treatment is especially important for persons housed in correctional facilities because they are specifically vulnerable to the adverse effects of substance misuse. According to estimates, a substantial percentage of incarcerated persons have a history of substance use disorder (SUD).<sup>2</sup> Further, an even higher percentage of this population have substance involvement at the time of their crime or arrest, even if they do not meet the exact criteria for SUD.<sup>3</sup> Incarcerated individuals are also significantly more likely to experience an overdose than the general population. According to landmark research, incarcerated individuals are 129 times more likely to die of overdose within two weeks of their release.<sup>4</sup> As such, it is a public health imperative that this group be offered evidence-based treatment for addiction while they are incarcerated.

While expanding access to MOUD in jails especially can prove logistically challenging, the policy offers clear benefits to both incarcerated individuals and facilities at-large. Forced opioid withdrawal, which occurs if individuals are not offered a continuation of their treatment plan, causes several negative consequences including needless suffering and returning to use.<sup>5</sup> Further, forced opioid withdrawal is associated with elevated post-release overdose risk among individuals with OUD.<sup>6</sup> Expanded access to MOUD helps to curb the negative effects of opioid withdrawals. Research also shows that providing MOUD with methadone and buprenorphine in carceral settings improves treatment entry and retention post release and reduces mortality.<sup>7 8</sup> Further, the continuation of methadone treatment during incarceration has been shown to reduce disciplinary tickets.<sup>9</sup> In sum, providing access to MOUD during incarceration is a mutually beneficial and humane policy.

HB 1515 is a good policy that would help reduce harms associated with OUD and improve public health outcomes more broadly. A testament to its broad appeal, HB 1515 passed the House with near universal support.<sup>10</sup> **As such, we are proud to support HB 1515 and urge you to advance this life-saving legislation through the Senate before the end of this session.** If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [kmvz@yahoo.com](mailto:kmvz@yahoo.com). We are eager and willing to work with you.

Sincerely,



Kristin Van Zant, MD, FASAM  
President, Pennsylvania Society of Addiction Medicine

CC: The Honorable Lisa Baker

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<sup>1</sup> SAMHSA. (2024). *Medications for Substance Use Disorders*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/medications-substance-use-disorders>

<sup>2</sup> NIDA. (2020). *Criminal Justice DrugFacts*. National Institutes of Health. <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/criminal-justice>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Binswanger, I. A., Stern, M. F., Deyo, R. A., Heagerty, P. J., Cheadle, A., Elmore, J. G., & Koepsell, T. D. (2007). Release from Prison — A High Risk of Death for Former Inmates. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 356(2), 157–165. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmsa064115>

<sup>5</sup> Fiscella, K., Noonan, M., Leonard, S. H., Farah, S., Sanders, M., Wakeman, S. E., & Savolainen, J. (2020). Drug- and alcohol-associated deaths in U.S. jails. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 26(2), 183–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078345820917356>

<sup>6</sup> Mattson, C. L., O'Donnell, J., Kariisa, M., Seth, P., Scholl, L., & Gladden, R. M. (2018). *Opportunities to prevent overdose deaths involving prescription and illicit opioids, 11 states, July 2016–June 2017*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6734a2.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Hedrich, D., Alves, P., Farrell, M., Stöver, H., Möller, L., & Mayet, S. (2012). The effectiveness of opioid maintenance treatment in prison settings: A systematic review. *Addiction*, 107(3), 501–517. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2011.03676.x>

<sup>8</sup> Green, T. C., Clarke, J., Brinkley-Rubinstein, L., Marshall, B. D., Alexander-Scott, N., Boss, R., & Rich, J. D. (2018). Post-incarceration Fatal Overdoses After Implementing Medications for Addiction Treatment in a Statewide Correctional System. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 75(4), 405. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2017.4614>

<sup>9</sup> Moore, K. E., Oberleitner, L., Smith, K. M. Z., Maurer, K., & McKee, S. A. (2018). Feasibility and Effectiveness of Continuing Methadone Maintenance Treatment during Incarceration Compared to Forced Withdrawal. *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, 12(2), 156–162. <https://doi.org/10.1097/adm.0000000000000381>

<sup>10</sup> Roll Call Vote (Friday Jul. 7, 2023

3:44PM)

[https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/RC/Public/rc\\_view\\_action2.cfm?sess\\_yr=2023&sess\\_ind=0&rc\\_body=H&rc\\_nbr=507](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/RC/Public/rc_view_action2.cfm?sess_yr=2023&sess_ind=0&rc_body=H&rc_nbr=507)