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April 29, 2021

Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Health Committee
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1011 (Wiener) as introduced February 18, 2021 – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Wood,

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports AB 1291. AB 1291 will reduce barriers to care by requiring plans to cover medically necessary MAT without prior authorization and without requirements for step therapy or requirements for concurrent behavioral health therapy. It will also place the FDA-approved medications for treatment of substance use disorders on the lowest cost-sharing tier.

Medication-assisted treatments (MAT) are some of the most effective treatments for individuals with substance use disorder. Despite the widespread evidence in support of MAT, individuals seeking these medications to aid in their recovery frequently encounter significant administrative barriers due to prior authorization and step therapy requirements. For someone who has decided the time is right to seek help for their substance use disorder, delays of weeks or even days can mean the difference between life or death—they might no longer be in the mindset to seek treatment once the time has passed for their medications to be approved.

A 2017 California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM) survey of its membership showed significant concern about the administrative barriers created by authorization requirements. 41% of physicians experienced situations where patients went without treatment due to authorization delays. Often one to two hours of employee time was required per patient to collect documentation for clinical justifications, drug screens, and counseling, and to call the health plan (which was required more than half the time). When a person struggling with addiction is willing to work with their doctor and try medication- we need to take advantage of that opportunity. Given the current strain on our health care systems, we must remove barriers to accessing help.

AB 1011, would significantly increase timely access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for people with substance abuse disorders, including opioid addiction and alcohol addiction. Saving lives by removing well-documented barriers that hamper Californians seeking mental health and addiction care from accessing treatments to lead a healthy life.

For these reasons, DRC supports this bill. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position or if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Cramer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory Cramer
Senior Legislative Advocate

Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Health Committee
Honorable Scott Wiener, California State Assembly
Angela Hill, Legislative Director, Office of Assemblymember Wiener