

## Congressman Suffers from an Affliction that Affects Millions of Americans

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NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, announces its full support for Rep. Patrick Kennedy as he seeks treatment for the disease of addiction. Mr. Kennedy suffers from the same disease as millions of other Americans, illustrating that addiction does not discriminate when it comes to age, race, socio-economic status, profession or any other demographic indicator.

"Mr. Kennedy has a chronic illness that is treatable, and relapse is common in any chronic illness," said Mary Woods, President of NAADAC. "Addiction is a brain disease that happens at a neuro-chemical level, much like other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension and heart disease. All of these chronic illnesses requires adherence to treatment and lifestyle changes. Relapse in addiction is often less frequent than in other chronic illnesses. I applaud Mr. Kennedy's decision to enter treatment, as it demonstrates his commitment to his health, his family and the people he represents in Congress."

NAADAC echoes the sentiments of Rep. Kennedy, who said on May 5, "I struggle every day with this disease, as do millions of Americans. The reoccurrence of an addiction problem can be triggered by things that happen in everyday life, such as taking the common treatment for a stomach flu. That's not an excuse for what happened Wednesday evening, but it is a reality of fighting a chronic condition. And I would like to call once again for passage of mental health parity." Mental health parity is a requirement for health insurance providers to supply the same coverage for mental health services ? which in many cases includes substance abuse treatment - as all other medical coverage. Currently, 39 states require mental health parity and 32 states have a minimum mental health benefit mandate.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, estimates that 22 million Americans suffer from addiction, but that 87% of them went without drug or alcohol treatment.

"We all know people who are affected by the disease of addiction, people who need treatment or those who are in recovery. Mr. Kennedy is a power of example for people today who need to

make the decision to enter treatment," stated Woods.

NAADAC is a membership organization of thousands addiction services professionals. With affiliates in 46 states, NAADAC is the largest membership organization serving addiction counselors, educators and other addiction-focused health care professionals, who specialize in addiction prevention, treatment and education.