

Sharing Your Voice: A NAADAC Advocacy Update

Whether you live in a red state, a blue state, or somewhere in between, the significance of the opioid crisis has permeated our nation’s consciousness and awakened a bipartisan streak in an otherwise divided Congress.

Addiction professionals have long understood the need for our nation to invest more resources into prevention, treatment, and recovery services for those living with substance use disorders. Advocacy plays a central role in shaping the policies that impact our profession and practice, and NAADAC is committed to ensuring that your voice and experience as addiction professionals resonate through the halls of Washington. Our industry has led the call at the federal level to enhance these vital services and we are pleased that lawmakers are taking notice and responding.

In the spirit of this commitment, NAADAC has partnered with a government affairs firm with a longstanding track record of developing, implementing, and shaping health care policy at the federal level. Led by former Congressman Alan Wheat (D-MO), Polsinelli Public Policy Group members Tim Casey, Julie Shroyer, and Sylvia Kornegay have already begun working closely with NAADAC to elevate our presence and amplify our members’ voices on Capitol Hill and across federal agencies.

Collectively, Polsinelli has extensive experience and bipartisan relationships on Capitol Hill, with the Administration, and across the federal agencies, including within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the National Institute of Health (NIH). In addition to Polsinelli’s advocacy capabilities, its legal practice was named ‘Best Health Care Law Firm’ in 2018 by U.S. News & World Report. Importantly, Polsinelli’s Public Policy Group leverages the resources of its firm while working hand-in-hand with its clients as an integrated part of the team. NAADAC is thrilled to partner with Polsinelli to advance and complement our critical mission on behalf of addiction professionals in the public policy arena.

Already, we are seeing exciting momentum for key priorities, including support for the addiction workforce in the form of student loan forgiveness. The Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act (H.R.



5102), which would incentivize students to pursue substance use disorder treatment professions by providing student loan relief, passed the U.S. House of Representatives on June 13th. NAADAC endorsed the legislation in advance of the vote and rallied support for its passage with an action alert to members. This legislation, championed by Representatives Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Hal Rogers (R-KY), garnered strong bipartisan support and, at the time of publication, awaits Senate action.

NAADAC also weighed in on the House’s recent push to pass a large package of opioid-related provisions, known as the SUPPORT for Patients Communities Act (H.R. 6). NAADAC supported the effort by encouraging members to call their U.S. Representatives. The

legislation passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in a 396–14 vote.

In addition to proactively shaping legislation, beating back potentially harmful legislation is a critical function of a strong advocacy operation. With that in mind, NAADAC took swift action to oppose a bill that could undermine the privacy rights of those with substance use disorders, prior to its consideration by the House. NAADAC believes the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act (H.R. 6082) would have unintended consequences for individuals with substance use disorders. The bill would permit the disclosure of patient records without written consent, under certain conditions, and could make these individuals subject to discrimination and legal consequences in the event that their information is improperly used or discussed. While the bill ultimately passed the House on June 20th, NAADAC offered valuable contributions to a contentious and complicated debate. The Senate next will consider this proposal and NAADAC will educate lawmakers about the unintended consequences of passing this harmful bill.

As you can see, our partnership with Polsinelli is already extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and helping us to better monitor and shape federal policy that impacts addiction professionals and the people we serve. The fight to expand prevention, treatment, and recovery services in the 115th Congress continues, and we hope you’ll join us. Stay tuned for more information about our Advocacy in Action Conference on November 12, 2018 in National Harbor, MD and our November 13, 2018 Capitol Hill Day.