



COLORADO FOUNDATION FOR
UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

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April 1, 2019

Re: SB19-008

Dear Chairman Lee, Vice Chair Gonzales, and Senators Gardner, Cooke and Rodriguez:

On behalf of the Colorado Foundation for Universal Health Care I urge you to vote “yes” for SB19-008 .

Our organization is a non-profit, non-partisan entity that seeks to improve health care for all Coloradans.

SB19-008 represents an important step forward in recognizing that substance abuse is a public health problem that requires treatment and counseling rather than punitive criminalization. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services states that “Medicated-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the use of FDA-approved medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders.” The scientific evidence overwhelmingly shows that it is the best form of treatment for opioid addiction:

Various studies, including systematic reviews of the research, have found that medication-assisted treatment can cut the all-cause mortality rate among addiction patients by half or more. Just imagine if a medication came out for any other disease — and, yes, health experts consider addiction a disease — that cuts mortality by half; it would be a momentous discovery.” German Lopez, “There’s a highly successful treatment for opioid addiction. But stigma is holding it back. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/7/20/15937896/medication-assisted-treatment-methadone-buprenorphine-naltrexone> (Updated Nov 15, 2017, 2:25pm EST).

This bill will provide expanded services to county jails and prisons that go beyond incarceration for drug offenses and it will provide a pathway for those convicted to clear their records and start with a clean slate after completing any sentence or treatment program. That alone will help those who have overcome their addiction to remove the stigma that would otherwise prevent them from rejoining society. This bill will also set in motion an effort to provide alternatives to criminal prosecutions where appropriate.

We see this bill as an important public health measure and urge you to move it forward to the full Senate.

Yours truly,

James R. Potter