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UPDATE



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New Proposals Threaten Treatment Credentials

by: Rob Blatt

"Formal education qualifications for counselors in drug treatment programs may undermine the effectiveness of such programs."

"Such educational requirements for counselors may hinder the provision of needed drug treatment services."

Disturbed by these statements? You should be. They are direct quotes from a bill introduced into Congress in November. The bill, "The Effective Substance Abuse Treatment Act" (S. 1466), was written by Senators Spencer Abraham (R-MI), Dan Coats (R-IN) and Tim Hutchinson (R-AR).

Unfortunately, the statements made in this bill are not unique. The idea that formal education and training requirements undermine access to effective treatment is echoed in the "Community Renewal Act" and other recent "charitable choice" provisions. All of these bills would reduce treatment provider eligibility requirements for state and federal grant money.

Not only do these proposals undermine state law and licensure requirements, they also contradict NAADAC members' core principle that credentialed/licensed professionals ensure the highest quality of addiction treatment for patients. Counselors with a professional education have demonstrated advanced level

knowledge in the science of alcoholism and drug addiction. Moreover, states' rigorous training requirements make credentialed addiction counselors uniquely experienced to provide care in our specialized field.

Bills like the "Effective Substance Abuse Treatment Act" reveal a lack of information among some members of Congress. NAADAC is working closely with other organizations to educate congressional members. But we need your help.

Lawmakers must hear from you and your patients. Send emails and faxes to your senators and representatives. Tell them how treatment from a credentialed counselor reduces patient drug use by well over 50%. Be sure to visit the advocacy section at NAADAC.org for more useful information to share with lawmakers.

In addition, encourage your patients to talk about their treatment and recovery with their members of Congress. Facts and figures only go so far. Personal stories about restored families and improved workplaces are incredibly valuable. Help your senators and representatives learn about the inspiring effect of addiction treatment when it's provided by a trained, tested and licensed caregiver.

Together, we can advance our profession and promote the health of all Americans.