



December 4, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

We write on behalf of the undersigned organizations to express concerns with S. 644, the *Modernizing Opioid Treatment Access Act*, which would expand access to methadone for an individual's unsupervised use to treat an opioid use disorder.

We continue to support greater investments to improve law enforcement's ability to respond to those suffering with substance use disorders (SUD), especially as overdose deaths continue to climb across the country. Medication assisted treatment (MAT) is a critical tool law enforcement uses to meet the needs of those who are in crisis, but appropriate guardrails are necessary to ensure safe and effective treatment.

Typically, methadone must be dispensed to individuals in-person through opioid treatment programs. While we support the bill's intent to expand the availability of MAT, drastically shifting this policy without research on its impact could lead to unintended consequences for an individual's recovery plan, risk abuse and relapse, and potentially lead to improper treatment.

Over the years, law enforcement has adjusted protocols and improved safeguards to address the smuggling and trade of methadone in jail settings. We are concerned the changes proposed by this legislation could contribute to a rise in crimes associated with the illegal trade of methadone. Moreover, enabling access to methadone without proper support and supervision would exacerbate current challenges to maintaining safe access to and administration of MAT.

We appreciate and stand ready to support your continued efforts to provide necessary resources to treat those with SUD who come into contact with the criminal justice system, but advancing the *Modernizing Opioid Treatment Access Act* in its current form could impact progress that has been made to support communities across the nation. We encourage the Committee to consider studying the impact of expanding access to methadone before making additional policy changes. A thorough review is necessary to ensure that any policy changes Congress may advance appropriately balance both public health and public safety.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can further assist.

Sincerely,

Major County Sheriffs of America  
National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies  
National Association of Police Organizations  
National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition  
National Sheriffs' Association  
Sergeants Benevolent Association NYPD