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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Leads Effort To Extend Treatment of Opioids



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is leading a bipartisan coalition of 45 attorneys general urging the extension of emergency rules to aid those suffering with opioid use disorder. The attorneys general are calling on the Drug Enforcement Administration and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to permanently extend telehealth flexibilities for prescribing buprenorphine, an opioid use disorder treatment. Buprenorphine is one of three medications that is FDA-approved to treat patients suffering from addiction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food and Drug Administration allowed telehealth services to prescribe the medication, but this rule is set to expire when the COVID-19 public health emergency ends.

The nation is in the grips of an opioid crisis, with more than 100,000 Americans dying due to overdose last year alone. State attorneys general are on the front lines fighting the crisis to protect Americans from deadly synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Attorney General Moody recognizes that interdiction efforts alone will not end the crisis.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As we continue to fight the deadly opioid crisis claiming tens of thousands of lives across our nation, it is important that people struggling with addiction have access to medication that can help them stop using. Keeping the telehealth rules for prescribing buprenorphine in place will go far in helping us fight this crisis and save lives—and I am proud to lead a bipartisan coalition of attorneys general in this important effort.”

As a condition of the COVID-19 public health emergency, in March 2020 the DEA allowed audio-visual telemedicine services to prescribe all Schedule II-V controlled substances, including buprenorphine. Without the proposed permanent extension, the current expiration of the public

health emergency has the potential to cut off an estimated 2.5 million U.S. adults who use the opioid use disorder treatment.

In a letter to head DEA and SAMHSA officials, the attorneys general highlight how the existing flexibilities are critical to linking individuals with opioid use disorder to care. The attorneys general state: “The number of patients receiving buprenorphine as treatment…increased significantly when telehealth flexibilities were allowed…it also improved retention in care and reduced the odds of overdose for individuals prescribed buprenorphine via telehealth for opioid use disorder treatment.”

The current allowance for telehealth services also expands access to buprenorphine to patients who may have previously struggled to receive the medication. The attorneys general state: “An estimated 28 million Americans live more than 10 miles and about three million live over 30 miles from a buprenorphine provider. Today, the delivery of care for buprenorphine treatment has shifted significantly to telehealth, making it more accessible than ever for individuals to access the treatment they need.”

In addition to Attorney General Moody, the attorneys general of the following states and territories signed onto the letter: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

To read the full letter, click here.