



**CALIFORNIA
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION**

*Providing Leadership in
Health Policy and Advocacy*

September 7, 2017

Dear Member of the California Congressional Delegation:

The California Hospital Association (CHA) — representing more than 400 hospitals and health systems and 97 percent of patient beds in the state of California — is writing today to support the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act (H.R. 3545). This bill would align federal regulations governing the confidentiality of substance use disorder treatment records with the federal regulations governing all other health information (that is, the regulations promulgated pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)).

Today's inconsistent federal health information privacy regulations stand as a barrier to providing integrated, whole-person care for patients who have a substance use disorder. Patients do not have a substance use disorder in a vacuum; they have co-occurring physical and mental health conditions as well. It is crucial that health care providers have complete information about a patient in order to provide optimal care.

The HIPAA health information privacy regulations were designed thoughtfully, with considerable public input over several years, to carefully and appropriately balance the privacy rights of patients with the important goal of sharing necessary information to provide optimal patient care. The HIPAA regulations apply to protect all types of health information that patients may feel is especially sensitive, including mental health, abortion, cancer, HIV, and other sexually transmitted disease records. It is time to stop stigmatizing substance use disorder patients and treat them similarly to all other patients. Aligning substance use disorder privacy regulations with HIPAA regulations will simultaneously improve the quality of care provided to substance use disorder patients and reduce the cost of health care by eliminating the cost to providers of complying with two different sets of regulations.

CHA encourages you to cosponsor the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act (H.R. 3545) to help patients with substance use disorders receive the integrated care they need.

If you have questions, please contact me in the CHA Washington, DC office at aorourke@calhospital.org or (202) 488-4494.

Thank you for your support of California's hospitals and the patients they care for.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne O'Rourke".

Anne O'Rourke
Senior Vice President, Federal Relations