**ASAM Statement on the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee’s New Report on the Economic Toll of the Opioid Crisis**

“Today’s [report](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/67bced7f-4232-40ea-9263-f033d280c567/jec-cost-of-opioids-issue-brief.pdf) from the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee underscores the catastrophic—but preventable—impact that the addiction and overdose crisis has had on virtually every community. The human toll is tearing at the fabric of families and our society. This crisis may continue to escalate if we fail to eliminate barriers to evidence-based addiction care, grow the addiction treatment workforce, and ensure equitable access to, and coverage for, comprehensive, high-quality addiction care for all Americans in need.

To that end, policymakers must urgently act to increase access to evidence-based treatments, including FDA-approved addiction medications and psychosocial treatments, which are known to help save lives and support recovery. Federal statistics show that, in 2020, just 6.5 percent of Americans with substance use disorder received any addiction treatment in the past year, suggesting we have a long way to go.

Given the heartbreaking overdose rate that has soared to record levels, federal policies must match the magnitude of this ongoing public health crisis. Congress and the Biden Administration must enact policies that will facilitate access to full-spectrum addiction care, such as eliminating the separate registration required to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder - while also ensuring more healthcare professional are educated on how to treat addiction; responsibly expanding access to prescribed methadone for opioid use disorder that can be picked up at pharmacies; and expanding and enforcing mental health and addiction parity law so that addiction care is appropriately covered and reimbursed by third-party payers, including Medicare.  Additionally, research shows that expanding harm reduction efforts keeps people alive and, therefore, must be one of many strategies to stop the extraordinary loss of life.

As a nation, we must recommit to smart and comprehensive policies that will end this crisis and save countless lives.”

* Brian Hurley, MD, MBA, DFASAM, President-Elect, American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM)