



August 19, 2016

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for H.R. 5842, Helping Our Veterans with Chronic Pain and Opioid Addiction Act of 2016

Dear Representative Kuster:

On behalf of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), I write in support of H.R. 5842, the Helping Our Veterans with Chronic Pain and Opioid Addiction Act. This bill would carry out a pilot program to improve treatment for veterans suffering from opioid addiction and chronic pain.

ONS supports both Congress and the Administration in their work to combat the prescription drug abuse epidemic, especially among the Veteran population. Assessment, diagnostic, and treatment services should be easily accessible to all individuals with an opioid use disorder. Recognizing the importance of efforts to address the serious and growing public health crisis caused by the inappropriate use of opioids, ONS urges lawmakers to also ensure that any new safeguards against the risk of opioids do not create barriers to access for cancer patients.

Oncology nurses are the health professionals involved in the administration and monitoring of chemotherapy and managing the associated side effects cancer patients may experience. Every day, we see the pain and suffering caused by cancer and understand the physical, emotional, and financial challenges that people with cancer face throughout their diagnosis and treatment. Opioids provide relief for many cancer patients facing moderate to severe pain as a result of their cancer diagnosis or cancer treatment.

ONS is a professional organization of over 39,000 registered nurses and other health care providers dedicated to excellence in patient care, education, research, and administration in oncology nursing. The growing demand for cancer care, from prevention to palliative care, requires oncology nurses to play a pivotal and increasingly important role in delivering high quality, safe, effective and efficient health care to people affected by, or at risk for, cancer.

The Helping Our Veterans with Chronic Pain and Opioid Addiction Act would help reduce opioid overprescribing and reduce veteran addiction. ONS thanks you for your leadership, and hopes Congress will continue to balance these public health concerns with the need to ensure the availability of appropriate pain management for cancer patients. We would be happy to discuss ways in which ONS may be of assistance in this endeavor, and would encourage you to contact Alec Stone, MA, MPA, ONS Director of Health Policy, at astone@ons.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan M. Schneider".

Susan Schneider, PhD, RN, AOCN®, FAAN
President
Oncology Nursing Society