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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

#2654

March 13, 2008

Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17104

To Whom it may concern,

The Department of Health's Proposed Regulation No. 10-186 on the confidentiality of alcohol and other drug addiction treatment records is alarming and I urge you to withdraw it immediately.

Allowing insurers and payers to obtain additional personal information regarding our most vulnerable citizens at the very time when they are reaching out for help is simply unacceptable to me and should be unacceptable to the leadership of this state as well.

Under the current rules - 4 PA Code 255.5 and the Pennsylvania Client Placement Criteria - addiction treatment programs are able to give out information that I think is quite sufficient for the payers and may already be too liberal in its scope.

In addition, the new release of information form provided as part of the regulation allows for oral consent to the release of private information. We can find no provision in federal law allowing for such a release.

My concerns about the proposed regulations are amplified by a Safe and Sound initiative in Philadelphia to develop a database with the records of anyone utilizing publicly funded services for mental health, drug and alcohol, HIV, housing and possibly criminal records as well.

I suspect that some of the data already collected for the database may have placed Philadelphia in violation of state and federal confidentiality rules.

I can't imagine that we would even think about allowing use of this type of database with people that work in the Capitol complex or with the families of public officials.

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I can't imagine that we would even think about allowing use of this type of database with people that work in the Capitol complex or with the families of public officials.

How can we afford any less dignity to the privacy rights of those unfortunate enough to need and touch the public system.

This type of intrusion into the privacy of the poor will create barriers to housing, healthcare and employment and is not acceptable to me. Please withdraw proposed Regulation No. 10-186.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise Williams Bishop".

Louise Williams Bishop
State Representative
192nd Legislative District

LWB/hw

cc: Governor Edward G. Rendell
Secretary Estelle Richman
Secretary Calvin Johnson, M.D.
Janice Staloski, Director
Honorable Frank Oliver
Honorable George Kenney
Honorable Edwin Erickson
Honorable Vincent Hughes