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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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February 22, 2008

Janice Staloski, Director
Bureau of Community Program Licensure and Certification
Pennsylvania Department of Health
132 Kline Plaza, Suite A
Harrisburg, PA 17104

RE: Opposition to Pennsylvania Department of Health's Proposed Regulation 10-186

Dear Ms. Staloski:

I write today to express my strong opposition to the Department of Health's Proposed Regulation 10-186, regarding the confidentiality of drug and alcohol addiction treatment records and personal information.

I believe that the right to privacy in treatment and patient confidentiality are paramount. Any changes to current regulations in this regard can have only adverse consequences for patients in treatment and their families. Just by the nature of their illness, individuals suffering from addiction often put off treatment. Expanding access to their extremely personal information as Proposed Regulation 10-186 will do, may discourage individuals seeking treatment and their families from coming forward to get help.

As a Commonwealth, it is incumbent upon us to act in the best interests of our citizens, especially those who are the most vulnerable. This regulation would go against that mission. 4 PA Code Section 255.5(b), as currently written, insures patient confidentiality. This essential right to privacy should not be compromised and provisions included in Proposed Regulation 10-186 will do just that. Proposed Regulation 10-186 is detrimental to the efficacy and successful outcome in the treatment of addiction. These changes are unnecessary and unwarranted.

As a member of the House Health and Human Services Committee, I have attended many hearings and spoken to many individuals involved on both sides of the drug and alcohol

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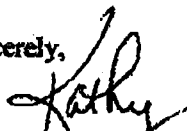
treatment process. Having had this opportunity, I find it hard to imagine that successful treatment can be achieved if a patient has to consider the possibility that extremely painful, sacred and personal information could be made available to a third party.

Accordingly, I join with my colleagues, the Pennsylvania Advisory Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, as well the three leading statewide drug and alcohol organizations; the Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations-Alliance, the Pennsylvania Association of County Drug and Alcohol Administrators and the Drug and Alcohol Service Providers Organization of Pennsylvania, to vehemently oppose Proposed Regulation 10-186 being promulgated by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

In closing, I implore you to consider the very real and serious ramifications of Proposed Regulation 10-186, and maintain the privacy and protection provided by 4 PA Code Section 255.5(b). Let's continue working together toward recovery by encouraging our most vulnerable citizens to seek assistance in overcoming their addictions. We must protect a patient's right to privacy and not make the decision to seek treatment harder than it already is.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



KATHARINE M. WATSON
Member, Health and Human Services Committee
144th Legislative District

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