

WellLink Health Alliance Supports Naloxone Distribution at Hospitals

As convener of the Northeast Ohio Opioid Consortium, WellLink Health Alliance expresses strong support for the *Hospitals As Naloxone Distribution Sites (HANDS) Act (HR 5120)*, introduced in Congress on September 3, 2025.

This legislation would remove barriers to life-saving treatment by requiring Medicare and Medicaid to cover the cost of naloxone provided by hospitals to patients at risk of overdose prior to discharge, ensuring access at no cost to the patient.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that more than 1,000 individuals are treated in emergency departments (EDs) each day for opioid-related events. When patients present in the ED following an overdose, hospitals have a critical opportunity to move beyond stabilization and engage patients in ongoing care.

WellLink Health Alliance believes physical and mental health are inseparable, and every individual deserves access to comprehensive, high-quality behavioral health services. Hospitals play an essential role within the substance use disorder (SUD) care continuum, which includes prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery, and must be equipped to meet patient needs across these areas.

Evidence shows that individuals who initiate SUD care during hospitalization are more likely to engage in outpatient treatment, remain in care longer, and achieve more substance-free days compared to those who receive only a referral. Enabling hospitals to distribute naloxone directly to at-risk patients strengthens harm reduction strategies and creates greater opportunities for successful connections to treatment and recovery.

WellLink Health Alliance recognizes that continued efforts are needed to eliminate barriers to behavioral health care. We stand ready to partner in advancing policies and practices that expand access, improve outcomes, and support individuals and families impacted by substance use disorder.