

RESOLUTION

Subject: Mitigate Criminal Legal Barriers Which are Preventing Kentuckians Who are Struggling with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) from Acquiring Gainful Employment

Submitted by: Lexington Medical Society

Referred to: Reference Committee

WHEREAS, 1,600 Kentuckians died from opioid-related overdoses in 2017 (Office of Vital Statistics), a rise of 117% in heroin and 564% in fentanyl from 2012-2017; and

WHEREAS, treating the opioid epidemic criminally has not yielded acceptable results; and

WHEREAS, possession of heroin, fentanyl or other scheduled drugs in Kentucky is a Class D felony which may lead to imprisonment of 1-3 years; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky incarceration rates for Class D felony related offenses have soared between 2012-2016, offenders jailed for drug possession rose from 911 in 2012 to 1,836 in 2016; and

WHEREAS, cost to incarcerate a state inmate in Kentucky is \$18,406 per year, and the cost to taxpayers in 2016 to imprison offenders for drug offenses was \$82 million; and

WHEREAS, Princeton economist, Alan Krueger, published in 2017, a strong link between rising opioid prescriptions and declining workforce participation rates, citing half of men age 25-54 who were not in the workforce were taking pain medications daily; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce on workforce participation in a 2017 report found Kentucky had one of the lowest workforce participation rates in the country, citing contributing factors to include high levels of disability, poverty and low education, incarceration, and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky employers are struggling to fill available jobs; but employers are reluctant to hire someone in recovery due to their criminal background and the negative stigma associated with addiction; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky's approach to solving the opioid crisis criminally has contributed to the tremendous disconnect between Kentucky employers who need to fill jobs and Kentucky residents in recovery who are searching for gainful employment; and

WHEREAS, addicts who are working on recovery need a path back to society that includes gainful employment; and

WHEREAS, without a community willing to accept the recovering population, there is little chance of reintegration back into Kentucky's workforce; and

WHEREAS, encouraging employment of Kentuckians pursuing recovery will give them purpose as they look at life beyond drug abuse, and it will boost workforce participation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Kentucky Medical Association supports efforts to mitigate criminal legal barriers which are preventing Kentuckians who are struggling with substance use disorder (SUD) from Acquiring Gainful Employment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Kentucky Medical Association joins the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce in promoting legislative changes to lessen penalties for Kentuckians struggling with substance use disorder, downgrading nonviolent, non-trafficking, drug possession charges from felonies to misdemeanors with the requirement that the person undergoes an approved treatment program.