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Fourth Meeting of the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis Convenes Today

Congressman Kennedy to probe health insurance leaders on behavioral health parity compliance

Washington, DC / October 20, 2017 – The President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis will convene today at The Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C. This is the Commission’s fourth and final meeting prior to the release of its recommendations to President Trump. The meeting will include presentations from invited government, health plan, and health insurance leaders regarding the industry’s efforts to fully implement provisions of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) – a landmark law requiring insurance plans to cover mental health benefits equal to that of medical/surgical benefits.

Commissioner Kennedy served as the chief sponsor of that legislation while in Congress. In the nearly 10 years since the enactment of MHPAEA, the health insurance industry has failed to achieve the full aim of the law. The parity provisions outlined in the law are a critical component to ensuring that individuals living with mental health and substance use disorders receive access to the life-saving care needed.

The Commission will listen to remarks from eight of the nation’s largest private health insurance plan leaders, including a presentation by Labor Secretary R. Alexander Acosta. The United States Department of Labor is responsible for administering and enforcing health insurance benefits for roughly half of the U.S. workforce.

The Commission, created by Presidential Executive Order 13784, is expected to release its final report in November.

The meeting will be [live streamed](#). Click [here](#) to view the full agenda.

WHO:

- Commissioner Chris Christie**, Commission chairman, Governor of New Jersey
- Commissioner Charlie Baker**, Governor of Massachusetts
- Commissioner Roy Cooper**, Governor of North Carolina
- Commissioner Patrick J. Kennedy**, founder of The Kennedy Forum
- Commissioner Bertha Madras, Ph.D.**, professor of psychobiology in the Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
- Commissioner Pam Bondi**, Florida Attorney General
- Reed Cordish**, assistant to the President for intergovernmental and technology initiatives
- The Honorable R. Alexander Acosta**, Secretary, United States Department of Labor

The Honorable Eric Hargan, Acting Secretary, United States Department of Health and Human Services

The Honorable Rod Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General, United States Department of Justice

The Honorable David M. Shulkin, Secretary, United States Department of Veterans Affairs

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the President

Marilyn Tavenner, president & CEO, America's Health Insurance Plans

Pamela Greenberg, president & CEO, Association for Behavioral Health & Wellness

Dr. Harold Paz, executive VP & chief medical officer, Aetna

Joseph Swedish, chairman, president & CEO, Anthem Inc.

Kim Holland, VP, state affairs, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Dr. Anuradha Rao-Patel, medical director, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina

Dr. Douglas Nemecek, chief medical officer, Cigna

Dr. Michael Sherman, senior VP & chief medical officer, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care

Dr. Edward M. Ellison, executive medical director and chairman, Southern California Permanente Medical Group (on behalf of Kaiser Permanente)

Dr. Richard Migliori, executive VP & chief medical officer, UnitedHealth Group

Diane Holder, president & CEO, UPMC Health Plan

WHEN: Friday, October 20, 2017 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. EDT

WHERE: The Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20502
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/live>

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About The Kennedy Forum

Founded in 2013 by former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy (D-R.I.), The Kennedy Forum focuses on advancing evidence-based practices, policies, and programming in mental health and substance use issues. This is achieved through promoting public discourse in health and addiction issues, ensuring equal coverage for patients living with mental health and/or substance use disorders; and advancing prevention and treatment throughout the entire continuum of the healthcare delivery system. The Kennedy Forum's collaborative partnerships help to foster greater provider accountability, integration and coordination, cutting-edge technologies, and brain fitness and health. The nonprofit organization publishes frequent issue briefs and is a repository of other educational resources on parity issues. To learn more about The Kennedy Forum's efforts, please visit www.thekennedyforum.org.