



May 13, 2025

The Honorable Craig J. Coughlin

Assembly Speaker

New Jersey General Assembly

569 Rahway Avenue

Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Dear Assembly Speaker Coughlin,

On behalf of the Wayne Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse, I write to express our strong support for Assembly Bill No. 4682, which would expand access to safe, effective non-opioid pain management options across New Jersey. We thank Assemblymembers Anthony Verrelli, Margie Donlon, and Carol Murphy for introducing this meaningful legislation and urge its advancement without delay.

In Wayne and across the state, our communities continue to grapple with the devastating consequences of the opioid epidemic. In 2023, New Jersey lost **2,454 individuals to opioid-related overdoses**—accounting for **88.3% of all overdose deaths**.ⁱ Behind each of these numbers is a person, a family, and a community forever changed.

Far too often, the pathway to addiction begins with a prescription—usually for acute pain, after a surgery, accident, or injury. In New Jersey, **26.3 opioid prescriptions were written for every 100 residents in 2023**.ⁱⁱ These figures reflect a system that has long prioritized opioids over non-addictive alternatives—not because they’re more effective, but because they’re significantly cheaper and more readily covered by insurance. In fact, as many as **90 percent of all surgical patients** in the United States receive a prescription for opioids to manage postsurgical pain.ⁱⁱⁱ

A4682 is a powerful step toward shifting that dynamic.

This bill works to prevent addiction before it begins by prohibiting insurers from requiring patients to try opioids before covering non-opioid alternatives for acute pain. This is not about restricting access to opioids for those who need them. It is about ensuring patients have choices—and that those choices include FDA-approved, evidence-based treatments such as nerve blocks, NSAIDs, and other physician-administered products that do not carry the same risk of addiction.

This state legislation aligns with efforts at the federal level through the Alternatives to Prevent Addiction in the Nation (Alternatives to PAIN) Act, a bipartisan bill recently reintroduced in the

119th Congress (H.R.1227/S.475). Both initiatives recognize that preventing opioid addiction requires more than just treating overdoses—it requires giving patients real choices before addiction ever takes root.

As Coordinator of the Wayne Alliance, I've spent years advocating for both mental health and substance use prevention. We know that mental health and substance use are deeply intertwined. The trauma, isolation, and stigma that often accompany chronic pain and opioid misuse only make recovery more difficult. That's why it is critical to intervene earlier—with compassion, with options, and with policies that prioritize prevention.

This legislation aligns with our mission and the work we do every day to foster understanding, offer support, and reduce stigma. As the Township of Wayne recently proclaimed, mental health is a cornerstone of overall well-being. That includes how we approach pain and recovery.

This bill reflects that same commitment. It centers prevention, respects patient choice, and reinforces that mental and physical health are inseparable.

We urge you to advance Assembly Bill No. 4682 without delay. It is a commonsense, compassionate step toward building a healthier New Jersey—one where fewer families must endure the pain of preventable addiction.

Thank you again for your leadership and your attention to this critical legislation. The Wayne Alliance stands ready to support your efforts and help ensure that individuals and families across New Jersey have access to safe, effective, and non-addictive options for pain management.

With Gratitude,

Robin Gulino
Coordinator
Wayne Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024). SUDORS Dashboard: Fatal Drug Overdose Data. <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/sudors-dashboard-fatal-overdose-data.html>

ⁱⁱ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2024). Opioid Dispensing Rate Maps. <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/opioid-dispensing-rate-maps.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Singh, K., Murali, A., Stevens, H., Vydiswaran, V. G. V., Bohnert, A., Brummett, C. M., & Fernandez, A. C. (2022). Predicting persistent opioid use after surgery using electronic health record and patient-reported data. *Surgery*, 172(1), 241–248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.surg.2022.01.008>