



Good Afternoon, chair, honored delegates, ladies and gentleman. It is an honor to be able to address you today. My name is Lauren Deluca. I am the founding president of CIAAG. Our organization has been working with the elected officials to help enact rational legislation that would ensure compassionate, patient centered care for those who suffer from chronic illnesses and incurable conditions.

Despite efforts to combat the opioid crisis in the United States, we have seen a rise in the abuse of illicit opioids such as fentanyl. We at CIAAG feel the increase in overdose deaths can largely be attributed to policy makers and law enforcements one-sided approach, which primarily focuses on restricting access to legally prescribed opioid analgesics.

In the year 2019 alone, more than 500 state laws have been proposed to combat the opioid crisis, largely focusing on restricting access to opioid medications. As a result, patients suffering from post-operative and chronic pain are finding themselves unable to access effective pain treatments. The failure to provide adequate pain control increases the changes the patient may engage in risky behavior; potentially jeopardizing their health and exposing themselves to illicit substances.

Regulatory and policy changes are mandating healthcare providers to recommend non-pharmacological treatments and self-management techniques in lieu of analgesic medications. As a result, there has been an increase in the reported number of individuals suffering in the post-operative care setting as well as those living with chronic illnesses and conditions. The continual push to restrict access to legally prescribed medications as a means to lower the incidence of opioid exposure, has proven to be ineffective as the crisis continues. It is known that illicit fentanyl is driving the crisis. In order to contain the crisis, the illicit drug trade needs to be stopped. This should be our primary focus if we want to effect change. We need to refocus our efforts, implement a new strategy, and make it our top priority as a nation to stop the flow of illicit drugs and to restore balance in our medical practices. The regulatory changes focus on restricting access has harmed public health and individualized patient care.

Our elected officials need to recognize the importance of patient centered care in order to achieve the dual goals of combatting the overdose crisis and the crisis of untreated pain.

Until the United States adopts a more balanced approach toward combatting the overdose crisis, we will continue to see rises in overdose deaths as well as suicides in those living with chronic pain.

We as a nation can do better.

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