



## Today, Oklahoma became a Top 10 state in the US for balanced policy to care for ALL patients.

Patient and Professional Advocates with The C50, the Coalition of 50 States Pain Advocacy Groups, have made their presence known consistently at the State Capitol, Opioid Commission Meetings, Bureau of Narcotics meetings, Pharmacy board meeting, Medical Board meetings, and with elected officials across the state in an attempt to encourage policy makers to work with the patients, advocates, and medical professionals affected in order to enact public policies that balance attempts to reduce addiction while protecting the typically medically fragile patients who depend on individual treatment plans that include pain medication to maintain their function and a semblance of quality of life. Senate Bill 848, which was written by Senator Rader, sponsored by Representative Echols, and then signed into law today by Governor Stitt with an emergency clause for immediate implementation, is a huge step in the right direction for everyone involved.

Last year, Oklahoma joined the ranks of 34 of states that placed serious limits on prescriptions for opioid pain medicines and even among those 34 it was in the Top 5 most restrictive, harmful, and confusing to patients and providers. While that was never the intent, more than 70% of prescribers either drastically changed the way they treated patients with pain medications, or quit prescribing to pain patients altogether. The original wording in the law was intended to limit initial prescriptions and therefore exposure to opioid pain medications with the hope that it would reduce addiction and overdoses (fatal and non-fatal). The passage of 2018 Senate Bill 1446 sparked a state of fear and disorientation regarding treating both acute and chronic pain from patients and medical professionals alike. Even before Nov 1, 2018 when the bill went into effect, it was clear that the 2019 Legislative Session would be forced to address and fix these issues.

“When the only metric for determining success is a reduction in prescribing, what REALLY matters can be overlooked completely: patients suffering and HUMAN outcomes!” **Tamera Stewart**, *C50 National Director*

For almost a year, patients have been suffering from forced reductions in doses, or outright abandonment, while prescribers did all they could to stay on the right side of a overly burdensome and unclear law. Some providers packed up shop for good and more than a few patients around the state died from suicide (refusing to live in excruciating pain), heart attacks, strokes, and other medical conditions that were exasperated by un- or under- treated pain.

This legislative body has also taken other huge steps towards limiting the destruction of the doctor - patient relationship by third party interference. Along with passing and signing into law Senate Bill 848, today Governor Stitt also signed House Bill 2632 which forces Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to operate more transparently and with regulation. This will translate into additional choices and savings for the patients at the pharmacy as well as protections for the independent pharmacies that have suffered dearly from seemingly unrelenting third party interference in recent years. These two bills approved by Governor Stitt today alone are forward movement for Oklahoma, but there are also more advances for the patient this session. A bill authored by Representative Cyndi Munson and Senator Dave Rader made changes to other statutes that created unnecessary and sometimes dangerous delays to appropriate treatment. Just like the other two mentioned above, the Step Therapy Reform Act, Senate Bill 509 passed both the House and the Senate UNANIMOUSLY more than proving that this collection of elected officials prioritize taking care of constituents and 'the little guy'!

We appreciate every moment that our policy makers spent listening to and addressing our concerns, returning our phone calls and emails to answer questions, and especially for making it such a priority this legislative session to pass and enact these and other protections that has propelled Oklahoma into one of the top states in the nation for caring about the wellbeing of its residents. The C50 looks forward to continuing to work with officials here in Oklahoma and across the country to push for balanced public policy and to protect the sacred Doctor - Patient relationship from unnecessary interference.

For more information regarding our organization's direct involvement in advocating for fair and equal public policy, please reach out anytime to Tamera Stewart, National Director and pain patient.

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