TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.2250/S.1451
AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE PRESCRIPTION MONITORING PROGRAM
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
June 7, 2021

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in support of the
House bill 2250 and Senate bill 1451, An Act Relative to the Prescription Monitoring
Program.

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is a professional association of over 25,000
physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and
practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, to give
them a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care
possible. The Medical Society supports providing health care teams with the best tools to help
manage patient treatment. Patient may be treated by various professionals across health care
systems, and it is important to manage controlled substance medications carefully. To that end,
it is vital for physicians to stay accurately informed about all relevant controlled substances a
patient is using, including those that may not be dispensed in an outpatient pharmacy. The
Medical Society supports this legislation that would provide prescribers with important patient
medication information that is not currently available through the Commonwealth's prescription
monitoring program.

The Massachusetts prescription monitoring program (PMP), known as MassPAT, is relied upon
by prescribers across the state as an accurate list of all controlled substance prescriptions
dispensed at outpatient pharmacies in Massachusetts. It is a critical tool for physicians to
understand what prescriptions are being taken by their patients. Unfortunately, there is an
important gap in the data uploaded into the MassPAT: it does not contain methadone dispensed
for the treatment of opioid use disorder. Methadone is required by federal law to be dispensed by
medical order at certified opioid treatment programs (OTPs), rather than by prescription at
outpatient pharmacies. This bill would amend the prescription monitoring program statute to
allow OTPs to submit prescription information for methadone used to treat opioid use disorder
(OUD).

Many physicians have noted that the absence of methadone information in the prescription
monitoring program poses significant patient safety concerns. Users of the PMP believe they are
seeing a complete list of controlled substances taken by a patient, and the lack of methadone
information is a glaring omission. Methadone prescribed for treatment of pain—rather than for
opioid use disorder—is included in the prescription monitoring program, as is buprenorphine,
another medication assisted treatment (MAT) used to treat opioid use disorder. The PMP should
allow for inclusion of information relating to these medications for all purposes, including MAT.

The primary barrier that previously precluded OTPs from reporting data regarding methadone
usage was a federal privacy law, 42 CFR Part II. This bill acknowledges the challenges placed by
the federal privacy laws and encourages pathways toward reporting of methadone that do not
conflict with federal law. Notably, however, the federal government issued a final rule

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that changed 42 CFR Part II to allow OTPs to enroll in state prescription drug monitoring programs and submit the dispensing data for controlled substances consistent with state law. Accordingly, we encourage favorable reporting of this bill to allow for the collection of this data in the PMP so that prescribers can have more accurate and complete information when treating their patients.