

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Sessions  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

I write in regards to numerous reports of bad actors that prey upon families and individuals in search of substance abuse treatment centers to help loved ones overcome addiction. The nation's opioid epidemic has devastated far too many American families. The possibility of losing a loved one is already frightening enough that those seeking help should not also have to worry about unscrupulous actors posing as legitimate treatment centers. Many of these centers profit from expensive and oftentimes unnecessary treatments, and in some cases, care for which charges accrued was not administered.

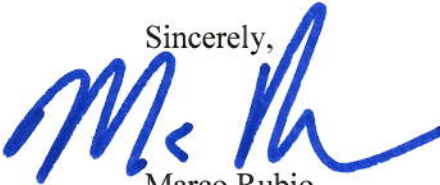
Numerous media outlets have highlighted the illicit practices of these sober homes and the harm they have inflicted. A recent *NBC News* investigation interviewed the mothers of several women who died from opioid overdoses after they thought they were receiving treatment at a Florida facility. The mothers recounted the victims being shuffled, during a brief period of time, between multiple treatment centers, excessive laboratory tests, and questionable treatments that resulted in insurance companies being billed upwards of \$1.2 million.<sup>i</sup> Unfortunately, these women did not get the help they needed and ultimately passed away after being "treated" at fraudulent sober homes, including one called the No Drug Zone.<sup>ii</sup>

Other reports indicate potential kickbacks between a Florida facility that intentionally targeted union employees from other states, where, "[i]nstead of getting the help they needed, many said they were essentially trapped at the facility while their health insurance was billed tens of thousands of dollars."<sup>iii</sup> Similarly, the *New York Times* identified businesses that act as a central hub for those seeking treatment that then sells each call to a treatment center. These central hubs act as patient brokers, where treatment centers pay \$40 - \$50 for every patient the call center directs to that facility.<sup>iv</sup>

These are just a few examples of the destruction illicit sober homes and treatment facilities have caused. While state and local law enforcement officials have taken aggressive steps to address this problem, I believe the federal government must use every tool at its disposal to identify and route out wrongdoers.

I request that you – to the fullest extent possible – investigate claims of kickbacks and false statements associated with Federal health plans, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) health insurance plans, and the interstate commerce of private insurance plans. Additionally, I ask that you develop a strategy to target disreputable treatment centers and sober homes in Florida to ensure they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law for the devastation they have caused.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,  
  
Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/megyn-kelly/florida-s-billion-dollar-drug-treatment-industry-plagued-overdoses-fraud-n773376>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/americas-heroin-epidemic/addicts-who-lived-florida-sober-home-called-no-drug-zone-n839831>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.statnews.com/2017/11/10/addiction-treatment-unions/?\\_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8xQE\\_cNqqz7gStxozhCmLXTpsAhiwPxuKA\\_oJ5fawdhzK5cLkTX6KhIASZVajzUs9QduPaWG-BdV8nYV\\_oesbzdQfeACJYgz7jIKxtrEwCzVj0Hdg&\\_hsmi=58369194](https://www.statnews.com/2017/11/10/addiction-treatment-unions/?_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8xQE_cNqqz7gStxozhCmLXTpsAhiwPxuKA_oJ5fawdhzK5cLkTX6KhIASZVajzUs9QduPaWG-BdV8nYV_oesbzdQfeACJYgz7jIKxtrEwCzVj0Hdg&_hsmi=58369194)

<sup>iv</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/27/business/drug-addiction-ads.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/27/business/drug-addiction-ads.html?_r=0)

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2018

The Honorable Scott Dahl  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of the Inspector General  
200 Constitution Avenue NW  
Room S-5502  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Inspector General Dahl:

I write in regards to numerous reports of bad actors that prey upon families and individuals in search of substance abuse treatment centers to help loved ones overcome addiction. The nation's opioid epidemic has devastated far too many American families. The possibility of losing a loved one is already frightening enough that those seeking help should not also have to worry about unscrupulous actors posing as legitimate treatment centers. Many of these centers profit from expensive and oftentimes unnecessary treatments, and in some cases, care for which charges accrued was not administered.

Numerous media outlets have highlighted the illicit practices of these sober homes and the harm they have inflicted. A recent *NBC News* investigation interviewed the mothers of several women who died from opioid overdoses after they thought they were receiving treatment at a Florida facility. The mothers recounted the victims being shuffled, during a brief period of time, between multiple treatment centers, excessive laboratory tests, and questionable treatments that resulted in insurance companies being billed upwards of \$1.2 million.<sup>i</sup> Unfortunately, these women did not get the help they needed and ultimately passed away after being "treated" at fraudulent sober homes, including one called the No Drug Zone.<sup>ii</sup>

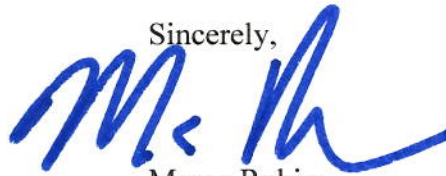
Other reports indicate potential kickbacks between a Florida facility that intentionally targeted union employees from other states, where, "[i]nstead of getting the help they needed, many said they were essentially trapped at the facility while their health insurance was billed tens of thousands of dollars."<sup>iii</sup> Similarly, the *New York Times* identified businesses that act as a central hub for those seeking treatment that then sells each call to a treatment center. These central hubs act as patient brokers, where treatment centers pay \$40 - \$50 for every patient the call center directs to that facility.<sup>iv</sup>

These are just a few examples of the destruction illicit sober homes and treatment facilities have caused. While state and local law enforcement officials have taken aggressive steps to address this problem, I believe the federal government must use every tool at its disposal to identify and route out wrongdoers.

Therefore, I request that you initiate an investigation into claims of kickbacks associated with Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) health insurance plans, which are prohibited under federal law, and closely coordinate with the U.S. Department of Justice in this process.<sup>v</sup> Additionally, I ask that you notify all employee welfare and pension benefit plans of the need to verify the treatment centers covered. This notification should also provide a list of bona fide treatment centers across the country with contact information for the appropriate state agencies, should the plans have additional questions.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator

cc: Assistant Secretary Preston Rutledge, U.S. Department of Labor Employee Benefits Security Administration

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<sup>v</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 1954

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2018

The Honorable Daniel Levinson  
Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
330 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Inspector General Levinson:

I write in regards to numerous reports of bad actors that prey upon families and individuals in search of substance abuse treatment centers to help loved ones overcome addiction. The nation's opioid epidemic has devastated far too many American families. The possibility of losing a loved one is already frightening enough that those seeking help should not also have to worry about unscrupulous actors posing as legitimate treatment centers. Many of these centers profit from expensive and oftentimes unnecessary treatments, and in some cases, care for which charges accrued was not administered.

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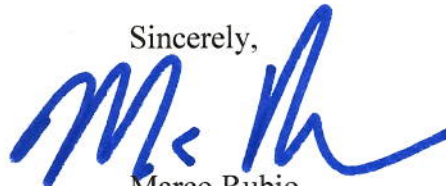
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These are just a few examples of the destruction illicit sober homes and treatment facilities have caused. While state and local law enforcement officials have taken aggressive steps to address this problem, I believe the federal government must use every tool at its disposal to identify and route out wrongdoers.

Therefore, I request that you initiate an investigation into claims of kickbacks and false claims associated with Federal health insurance plans, and closely coordinate with the U.S. Department of Justice in this process. Additionally, I ask that you develop recommendations for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to identify and suspend all payments to disreputable treatment centers or sober homes.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator

cc: Secretary Alex Azar, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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