

4. **ON RECOGNIZING OPIOID ADDICTION AS A HEALTH EPIDEMIC, ENSURING ACCESS TO TREATMENT AND PHARMACEUTICAL CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY**

Assistant Moderator Penny Lowes indicated that the next item of business was a resolution coming directly to the floor of the General Synod. Assistant Lowes indicated that the General Synod Standing Rules gives this as an option for resolutions deemed noncontroversial and not in need of time in a General Synod Committee for discussing and refining the resolution.

The Business Committee of the Thirty-second General Synod has recommended this proposed resolution be sent to a Plenary of the General Synod.

Assistant Moderator Lowes indicated that the resolution was submitted by the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.

Yvette Wynn, Vice Chair of the Business Committee, moved that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopt the resolution Recognizing Opioid Addiction as a Health Epidemic, Ensuring Access to Treatment and Pharmaceutical Corporate Responsibility, recommended its approval, and yielded the time to speak to the resolution to Katie McCloskey.

Assistant Moderator Lowes, without objection, granted voice to Katie McCloskey for the purpose of addressing the resolution.

Katie McCloskey spoke to the resolution.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

**19-GS-05 VOTED:** The Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the resolution Recognizing Opioid Addiction as a Health Epidemic, Ensuring Access to Treatment and Pharmaceutical Corporate Responsibility.

(Vote: 629 Yes; 11 No; 8 Abstentions – 648 electronic submissions registered)

**ON RECOGNIZING OPIOID ADDICTION AS A HEALTH EPIDEMIC, ENSURING ACCESS TO TREATMENT AND PHARMACEUTICAL CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY**

**A Resolution of Witness**

**Text of the Resolution:**

Whereas, faith leaders and pastors of all faiths including the United Church of Christ have a unique vantage on the opioid crisis, observing individuals' sufferings, families' anguish, and the shame of addiction that prevents the necessary discourse to help curb this national affliction; and

Whereas, opioid medications provide crucial pain management for terminal diseases and certain chronic conditions; and

Whereas, interference with access to opioid medications for individuals suffering from terminal diseases and chronic conditions is unethical and should be avoided; and

Whereas, in 2016 the number of overdose deaths involving opioids was five times higher than it was in 1999, and on average 115 people die every day from an opioid overdose; and

Whereas, a recent study by the RAND Corporation showed that while the number of Medicaid recipients receiving medication to treat opioid addiction has increased, the increase is smaller in poorer counties and in areas with greater black and Hispanic residents; and

Whereas, pharmaceutical or health care companies that make or distribute opioid drugs face growing potential liability from lawsuits along with regulatory, medical and public pressure to drastically reduce their use, including 27 U.S. states and more than 400 cities, counties, and other entities suing these corporations; and

Whereas, according to the White House Council of Economic Advisors, the opioid epidemic cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$504 billion in 2015, equivalent to 2.8 percent of GDP;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges all settings of the United Church of Christ and its members to recognize opioid addiction as a health epidemic

Be it further resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod calls on Congress to increase Medicare and Medicaid funding to treat opioid addiction;

Be it further resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod recognizes that opioid addiction is not a determinant of a person's worth, and invites a public discourse on the need for just and equitable treatment to lessen the stigma from asking for help and treatment;

Be it finally resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod urges all settings of the United Church of Christ to use all manner of activism, including shareholder activism of opioid pharmaceutical manufacturers and distribution corporations, to hold accountable those who are acting in bad faith with the American people, either by irresponsibly marketing, distributing, and prescribing to individuals or by criminalizing those who become addicted.

**Funding:**

Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

**Implementation:**

The Officers of the United Church of Christ, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.