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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 20 – S 2277
AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS – UNIFORM CONTROLLED
SUBSTANCES ACT – OFFENSES AND PENALTIES**

February 25, 2020

The ACLU is supportive of S 2277, which would exclude buprenorphine from the list of controlled substances for which possession can result in criminal penalties.

As a medically recognized treatment for substance abuse disorders, buprenorphine plays a critical role in the recovery for many individuals confronting addiction. The continued criminalization of such a substance only serves to further treat substance abuse disorders as an issue of criminal justice, rather than one necessitating rehabilitative and supportive measures.

It is just as critical that the possession of a substance such as buprenorphine not be what hinders an individual from accessing other structures necessary for substance abuse disorder treatment and recovery. Criminal charges can impact an individual's life substantially, including their ability to gain employment, housing, or education. In this regard, we additionally encourage the committee to favorably consider both this legislation and any legislation which would reclassify all simple possession charges from a felony to a misdemeanor.

This legislation is effective for both confronting the opioid crisis and promoting criminal justice reform. We support passage of this important bill. Thank you for your consideration.