

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 1, 2017

The Honorable Thomas Price, M.D.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Price:

I write to support the Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services' (DHS) application for the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Wisconsin is facing an opioid epidemic that continues to grow at an alarming rate. The rate of opioid overdose deaths in the state nearly doubled from 2006 to 2015, and opioid-related deaths are now a leading cause of injury deaths in Wisconsin. As a result of this growing crisis, DHS issued a Public Health Advisory in 2016.

I've held roundtables across the state and heard from local law enforcement, citizens, elected officials on both sides of the aisle, and first responders working on the front lines to combat this crisis. Wisconsin has shown a strong commitment to address the opioid crisis and we are working together to implement a number of efforts to curb opioid and heroin deaths and increase access to treatment. The message from our communities and families who have lost loved ones is clear: there is more work to be done and a strong federal partnership and support for these efforts is essential to fighting the epidemic.

The 21st Century Cures Act provided \$1 billion in additional investments to states to address opioid abuse. I was proud to lead the effort in Congress to include this new funding, which is now available through SAMHSA's State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grant. This new funding is critical to support DHS in increasing access to treatment, reducing unmet treatment needs and reducing opioid-related overdose deaths. Specifically, this funding would allow DHS to target several statewide needs:

- Support community coalitions focused on reducing the nonmedical use of opioids among people age 12 to 25.
- Establish a hotline to provide information on treatment services and recovery supports.
- Expand access to treatment for uninsured and underinsured individuals.
- Establish new opioid-specific treatment programs to reduce the distance people have to travel for these services.
- Establish a network for individuals in long-term recovery from the misuse and abuse of opioids trained to coach people through the treatment and recovery process.
- Develop training for professionals on proven intervention and treatment strategies for opioid misuse and abuse.

Fighting the opioid abuse epidemic is not a partisan issue, and a strong partnership between the federal government and our state is essential to an effective response. I remain strongly

committed to supporting programs that strengthen and advance local prevention, treatment and recovery efforts and provide critical resources to constituents. As such, I ask that you give full and fair consideration to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services' application.

Please keep Jessica Sielaff in my Madison office updated on the progress of this application and contact her should you have further questions or concerns. She may be reached at 30 West Mifflin Street, Suite 700, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, by phone at 608-264-5338, or by email at projects_grants@baldwin.senate.gov. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator