

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairman Blunt, Vice Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Murray:

As you prepare the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill for fiscal year (FY) 2020, we urge you to provide increased funding for opioid and other substance use disorder programs. We thank you for your bipartisan work to provide enhanced funding to address substance use disorders in the FY2020 legislation, however, despite such strong investments, the prescription opioid and illicit drug epidemic continues to ravage communities across the country. As such, we must maintain and increase our federal funding in education, prevention, treatment, and recovery supports.

Our states are putting federal dollars to work and have made progress in fighting the prescription opioid and illicit drug crisis. Unfortunately, this epidemic continues to grow and evolve. On average, more than 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose and in 2017, more than 47,000 people died from opioids, including heroin and fentanyl.¹ This represents a 10 percent increase in overdose death rates. Furthermore, overdose death rates linked to synthetic opioids, likely from illicitly manufactured fentanyl, increased more than 45 percent from 2016 to 2017 and many states are also facing increases in other substance use disorders, like methamphetamine abuse.² This public health emergency is wreaking wide-ranging health consequences on our children, families are struggling with trauma, and communities are faced with higher rates of related infectious diseases, such as HIV and viral hepatitis. We must do more.

Congress has shown strong bipartisan commitment to improving our federal response to this unprecedented challenge. The recently enacted *SUPPORT For Patients and Communities Act (H.R. 6)* illustrates this dedication by authorizing new efforts to prevent the flow of illegal fentanyl, opioids and methamphetamine from other countries; increase access to treatment; and extend and expand investments in local prevention and recovery efforts. It is essential that we commit to funding these provisions and prioritize allocating resources to a range of evidence-based public health programs. In order to realize the promise of this bipartisan reform and appropriately reflect the magnitude of this crisis, we strongly believe that a commitment to enhanced funding for programs to address substance use disorders is necessary.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/index.html>

² https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm675152e1.htm?s_cid=mm675152e1_w

To help our communities have the resources they need to improve health and save lives, we must also continue to build on the progress we have made through recent reforms such as the *21st Century Cures Act* and the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery (CARA) Act*, which are the backbone of our federal response. States and tribes, including our hardest hit states, are relying on a steady stream of funding through the targeted response investment, created by the *21st Century Cures Act*, and reauthorized and improved in the *SUPPORT Act*. The epidemic continues to strain local resources and present new challenges like methamphetamine abuse, making it essential to continue to enhance this funding.


We remain disappointed that President Trump has yet to take significant action relative to the magnitude of the problem since first declaring the opioid epidemic a public health emergency. A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that the results of this declaration have been limited and noted that the Administration made use of only three authorities available under such an emergency, one of which was a Paperwork Reduction Act waiver authority.³ President Trump's Budget only proposes relatively level funding for opioid programs and deep cuts to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. As such, strong funding for existing substance use disorder programs across agencies at the Department of Health and Human Services— including for local communities and organizations - is vital to help overcome this crisis.


Washington cannot turn its back on our communities and families who continue to be ravaged by the scourge of substance use disorders. We will continue to work together to support those struggling with addiction, which requires additional and sustained funding to carry out a multi-faceted approach for research, education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in the final FY2020 LHHS appropriations bill.

We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

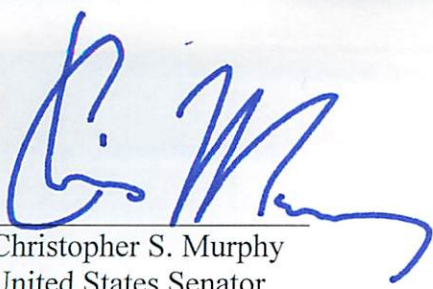

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

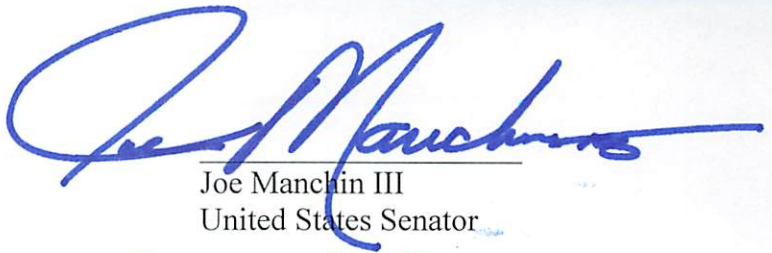

Robert Menendez
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

³ <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-685R>



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



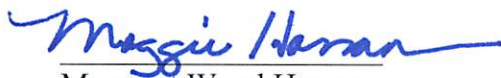
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



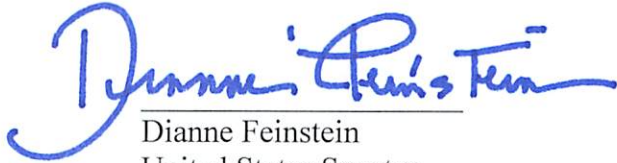
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



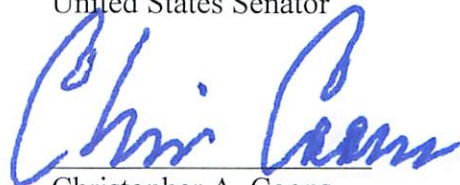
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



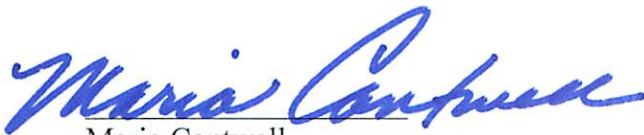
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



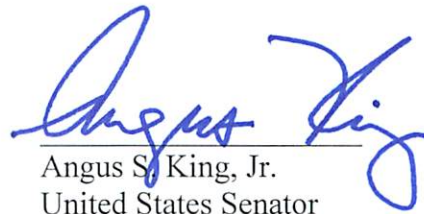
Tina Smith
United States Senator



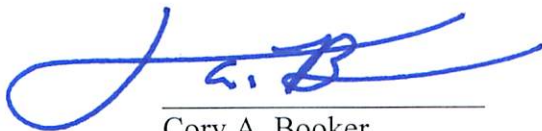
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



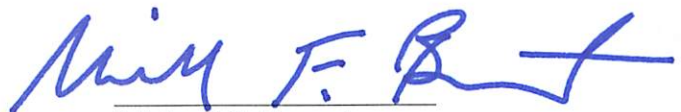
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



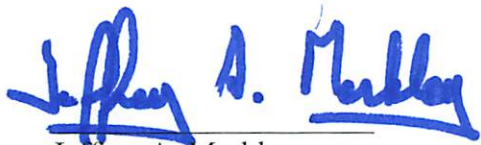
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



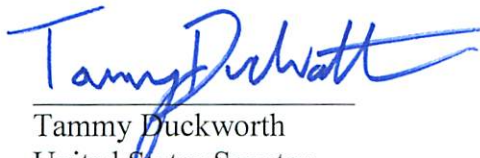
Gary C. Peters
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Amy Klobuchar
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