

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 17, 2017

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 Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Blunt, and Ranking Members Leahy and Murray:

We urge you to provide increased funding for opioid and other substance use disorder programs as you prepare the FY2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS-Ed) appropriations bill. States continue to experience epidemic levels of overdose deaths fueled by opioid prescription and illicit drug abuse. We thank you for your bipartisan commitment to enhanced funding for programs to address substance use disorders in the FY2017 legislation. A continued and strong investment in preventing overdose deaths, addressing misuse and abuse, and improving access to treatment remains critical in helping individuals suffering from opioid addiction and all substance use disorders achieve long-term recovery.

Opioid related fatal overdoses continue to grow at an alarming pace across the country. In 2015 alone, 33,091 Americans died from an opioid overdose – accounting for nearly two-thirds of all drug-related deaths.¹ Overdose deaths from synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl – which is 50 times more powerful than heroin – increased by 72 percent from 2014 to 2015, further underscoring the severity of the crisis². And, many more Americans are at risk: 2 million Americans are suffering from a substance use disorder involving prescription pain relievers and another 591,000 have a substance use disorder involving heroin.³ As our communities continue to struggle with all forms of prescription and illicit drug misuse, we have also seen surges in the transmission of Hepatitis C virus and HIV. We must do more to support communities in combatting this epidemic.

Congress has recognized the severity of the opioid epidemic and has taken bipartisan action to improve our federal response. In July 2016, Congress passed the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act* to authorize over \$181million per year in important new programs for states and community organizations to address substance use, expand access to medication-assisted treatment, strengthen state Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs, and improve the availability of naloxone. Providing funding for these activities is critical to realizing the promise of these

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm655051e1.htm>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm655051e1.htm>

³ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015.pdf>

reforms. In addition, the *21st Century Cures Act* authorized \$1 billion in supplemental federal funding for FY2017 and FY 2018 to support states in increasing access to treatment and recovery services. Congress appropriated half of that funding in FY2017 and President Trump indicated in his FY 2018 Budget Blueprint that the administration plans to request the remaining \$500 million. To ensure our states maintain continued progress in fighting the epidemic, it is essential that Congress appropriate these needed funds.

We agree with President Trump that “opioid abuse has become a crippling problem throughout the United States,” and that, “we have to solve this crisis.” To succeed, it is essential that existing substance use disorder programs across agencies at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, continue to be prioritized. Without significant, sustained investments – including funding for local communities and organizations - that reflect the scale of this crisis, our communities will be at a disadvantage in breaking the cycle of prescription and illicit drug abuse.


However, we risk losing the bipartisan progress we have made if the *21st Century Cures Act* funding is used to replace, rather than supplement, our historical investments in programs to address substance use disorders in this country. To this end, we strongly oppose cuts to existing opioid and substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery programs or the use of funding authorized by the *21st Century Cures Act* to offset such cuts. We request that the FY2018 appropriations bill reflect the magnitude of this public health crisis by increasing federal investment in addressing opioid and all substance use disorders across HHS agencies.


We appreciate your consideration of our request and understand the difficult decisions your Subcommittee will face in this fiscal climate. With a strong investment in prevention, treatment and recovery, we have an opportunity to fight back against this growing public health crisis.

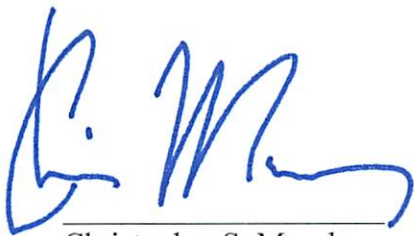
Sincerely,


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



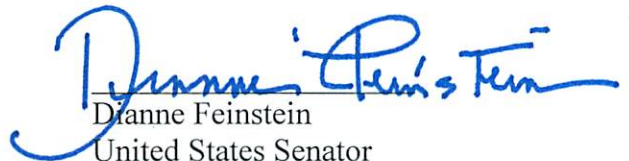
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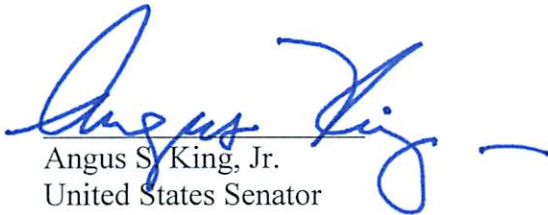
Al Franken
United States Senator



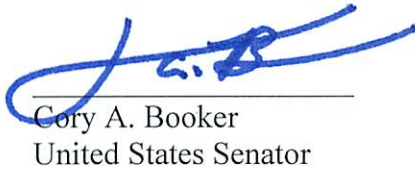
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Jon Tester
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United States Senator


Mazie K. Hirono
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Cory A. Booker
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Jeffrey A. Merkley
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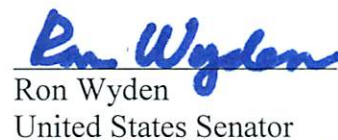

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

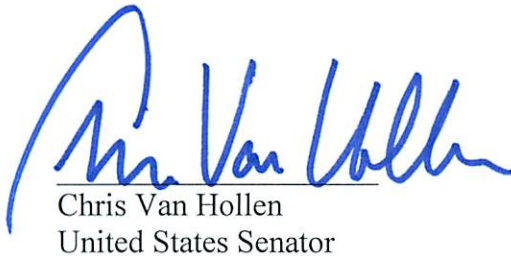

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