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March 16, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

I write to thank you for your previous support of the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program, and ask that you provide strong support for the program in the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill to support law enforcement efforts in helping to stem the nationwide heroin and prescription opioid abuse epidemic.

In my home state of New Hampshire and across the country, heroin and prescription opioid abuse are ruining lives and tearing apart families. This crisis does not discriminate by age, socioeconomic class, gender, or any other category. In 2015, 428 lives were lost to drug overdoses in New Hampshire – 158 were caused by fentanyl alone, and 43 were attributed to a combination of heroin and fentanyl. State and local first responders are on the front lines of this epidemic every day.

As you are well aware, one of the most important responsibilities of government is to protect its citizens and ensure public safety. Adequate funding for the Byrne JAG program is critical in helping to ensure the safety of our first responders and the public. For this reason, I have introduced the bipartisan Heroin and Prescription Opioid Abuse Prevention, Education, and Enforcement Act (S. 1134), which would reauthorize the Byrne JAG program through 2020.

Byrne JAG funds are awarded by fixed formula to state and local units of government to help augment their crime-fighting efforts. Once funding is allocated, state and local entities can use their funding for one of seven purposes areas, ranging from law enforcement programs to drug treatment programs. Each of the seven purpose areas is critical to fighting the heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid abuse epidemic and related criminal activity.

Byrne JAG has proven an effective and efficient tool in combatting crimes of all types. This program has been, and will continue to be, critical in our nationwide efforts to turn the tide on opioid abuse.

I appreciate your previous support for this program, and respectfully ask for your continued support in the FY 2017 CJS appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator