

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Vice Chairwoman  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Vice Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Cochran, Blunt, and Shelby, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, and Ranking Member Murray:

As you are aware, heroin use and prescription opioid abuse are having devastating effects on public health and safety across the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drug overdoses now surpass automobile accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death for Americans ages 25 to 64. Therefore, we write to request that you appropriate the necessary funding to address the opioid abuse epidemic in a comprehensive manner, along the lines of the initiatives called for under the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which focus on prevention, treatment, recovery, and support for law enforcement and first responders.

Every day, more than 129 Americans die as a result of drug overdose – and over half of these drug overdoses are related to prescription drugs. Behind these numbers are real people who have been severely affected by the nationwide opioid abuse epidemic and its consequences—loved ones whose lives were lost, individuals who are struggling to achieve and sustain recovery, law enforcement and first responders who are increasingly encountering overdoses, and communities

that have been turned upside down by substance abuse. That is why we were pleased to see the United States Senate recently take a positive step towards addressing this crisis in a comprehensive manner. Through the passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA, S. 524), the Senate has approved the authorization of at least \$80 million to fund prevention, treatment, recovery, and first responder initiatives to combat substance abuse.

While substance use disorders are treatable diseases of the brain, only about ten percent of those who need treatment are actually able to receive it. In light of this knowledge and the troubling aforementioned statistics, we write to express our strong support for funding in the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education and Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bills for programs that would support the comprehensive and integrated strategies to address opioid abuse included in CARA. This bipartisan legislation was developed over the past two and a half years through a cooperative process involving key national stakeholders in the public health, law enforcement, criminal justice, and drug policy fields, and is designed to fight prescription opioid abuse and heroin use holistically – from expanding prevention to supporting recovery.

Among other objectives, CARA would:

- Expand prevention and educational efforts, including dissemination of best practices, to prevent prescription opioid abuse and the use of heroin, as well as abuse of the powerful analgesic fentanyl.
- Expand the availability of opioid overdose reversal drugs to law enforcement agencies and other first responders.
- Expand resources to promptly identify and treat individuals suffering from substance use disorders in the criminal justice system.
- Encourage additional drug disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications, thereby keeping them out of the hands of children and adolescents.
- Launch an evidence-based prescription opioid and heroin treatment and intervention program to expand best practices throughout the country.
- Launch a medication assisted treatment and intervention demonstration program.
- Strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs to help states monitor and track prescription drug diversion and to help at-risk individuals access services.
- Reauthorize treatment programs for pregnant and postpartum women, and allow women in non-residential facilities and those who have come into contact with the criminal justice system access to these services.
- Reauthorize important task forces to combat heroin and methamphetamine abuse.

As you begin consideration of the FY 2017 appropriations bills, we urge you to provide full funding for the provisions included in CARA, which would provide the resources and incentives necessary for states and local governments to expand treatment, prevention, and recovery efforts for the millions of Americans who are affected by substance use disorders.

We also ask that you ensure adequate funding for CDC's prescription drug surveillance and monitoring activities and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Prescription Drug and Opioid Addiction program. Additionally, since we know that MAT should be an important component in treating

those struggling with opioid use disorders in the criminal justice system, we urge you to continue your support for the Medication-Assisted Treatment Pilot Program at the Bureau of Prisons.

Only through a comprehensive approach that leverages evidence-based initiatives in law enforcement, treatment, support for recovery, and prescribing practices for pain management, can we stem the current skyrocketing numbers of heroin and prescription opioid overdoses and deaths. Thank you for your attention to this urgent public health and safety issue.

Sincerely,

  
Kelly Ayotte  
U.S. Senator

  
Sheldon Whitehouse  
U.S. Senator

  
Amy Klobuchar  
U.S. Senator

  
Rob Portman  
U.S. Senator

  
Richard Blumenthal  
U.S. Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
U.S. Senator

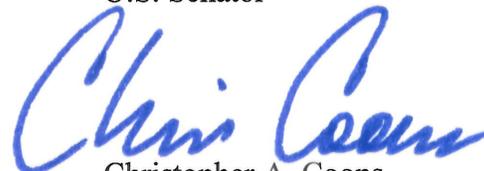
  
Barbara Boxer  
U.S. Senator

  
Sherrod Brown  
U.S. Senator

  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
U.S. Senator

  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
U.S. Senator

  
Susan M. Collins  
U.S. Senator

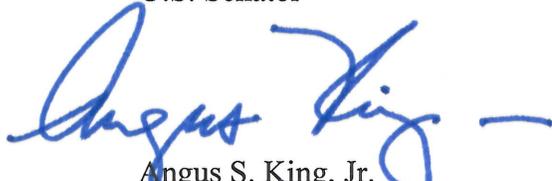
  
Christopher A. Coons  
U.S. Senator

  
Joe Donnelly  
U.S. Senator

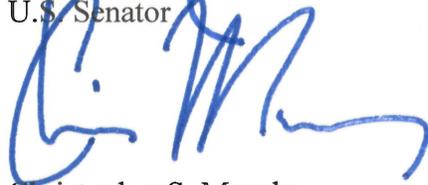
  
Richard J. Durbin  
U.S. Senator

  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
U.S. Senator

  
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Joe Manchin, III  
U.S. Senator

  
Christopher S. Murphy  
U.S. Senator

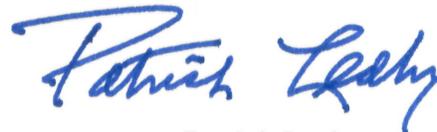
  
Charles E. Schumer  
U.S. Senator

  
Dan Sullivan  
U.S. Senator

  
Tom Udall  
U.S. Senator

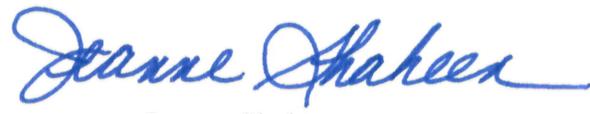
  
Al Franken  
U.S. Senator

  
Martin Heinrich  
U.S. Senator

  
Patrick Leahy  
U.S. Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
U.S. Senator

  
Bernard Sanders  
U.S. Senator

  
Jeanne Shaheen  
U.S. Senator

  
Jon Tester  
U.S. Senator

  
Mark R. Warner  
U.S. Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator