

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

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) 2019, we urge you to provide increased funding for opioid and other substance use disorder programs. We thank you for your bipartisan work to enhance funding to address substance use disorders in the FY2018 legislation and your commitment to providing \$3 billion in additional opioid funding for public health programs in the final FY2018 omnibus measure. As the prescription opioid and illicit drug epidemic continues to ravage communities across the country, we must maintain and increase our federal investment in education, prevention, treatment, and recovery supports.

While our states have made strong progress in fighting the prescription opioid and illicit drug crisis, this public health epidemic continues to proliferate. In 2016, more than 42,000 people died from opioids, including heroin, and emergency department visits for opioid overdoses rose by 30 percent.¹ Yet, as our federal response to this crisis has evolved, so has this epidemic; the rate of overdose deaths involving synthetic and highly potent opioids like fentanyl doubled from 2015 to 2016 and many states are also facing increases in other substance use disorders, like methamphetamine abuse. This public health emergency is producing serious, wide-ranging health consequences for our children, families struggling with trauma and communities with higher rates of related infectious diseases, such as HIV and viral hepatitis. We must continue to do more to tackle this unprecedented challenge.

Congress has recognized the severity of the opioid epidemic and has taken bipartisan action to improve our federal response. The recent *Bipartisan Budget Agreement of 2018* included a significant commitment to further tackling this crisis by providing for an additional \$6 billion in funding over two years for opioid use disorder and mental health activities. The remaining \$3 billion in additional funds available for FY2019 are indispensable to maintaining progress in this fight. It is essential that we commit to allocating these new resources and continue to prioritize that this funding be directed to a range of evidence-based public health programs. However, we will fail to realize the promise of this new investment if the additional \$3 billion is used to supplant rather than supplement our existing investments in substance use disorder programs.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db294_table.pdf#page=4; and <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/index.html>

We strongly believe that a commitment to enhanced funding for programs to address substance use disorders in addition to this new \$3 billion in funding is necessary to appropriately reflect the magnitude of this crisis.

To help ensure that our communities have the resources they need to improve health and save lives, we must continue to build on the progress we have made through reforms like the *21st Century Cures Act* and the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery (CARA) Act*. States and tribes, including our hardest hit states, are relying on a steady stream of funding through the targeted response investment that was created by the *21st Century Cures Act* and the recent funding agreement for FY2018. The epidemic continues to strain local resources, making it essential to enhance and extend this funding beyond FY2018. Further, sustaining existing substance use disorder programs across agencies at the Department of Health and Human Services— including funding for local communities and organizations - is vital to help our communities finally start to overcome this crisis.

In 2017, President Trump first declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency with the goal of mobilizing federal resources and strengthening the federal response to the crisis. Despite this official declaration, we are disappointed that the Administration has yet to take significant action relative to the magnitude of the problem. Washington cannot turn its back on our communities and families who continue be ravaged by the scourge of substance use disorders. We stand ready to 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. As such, we request that you, in addition to allocating the remaining \$3 billion Congress provided for opioid use disorders and mental health, increase funding for the epidemic in the final FY2019 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



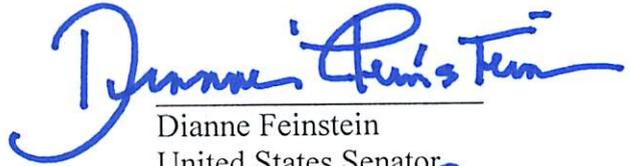
Joe Manchin III
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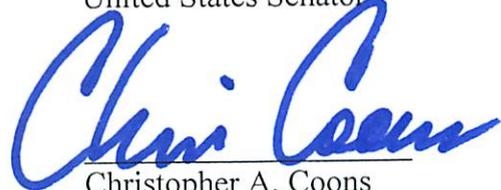
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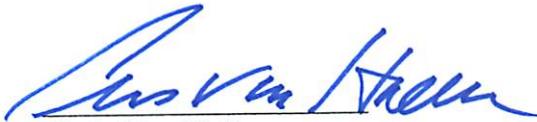
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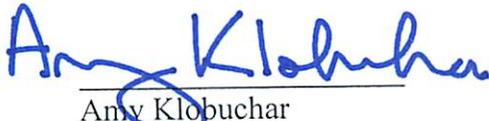
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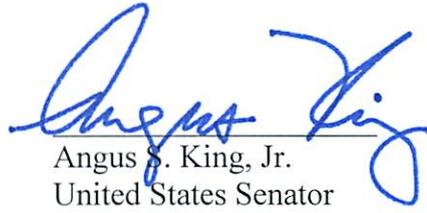
Tina Smith
United States Senator



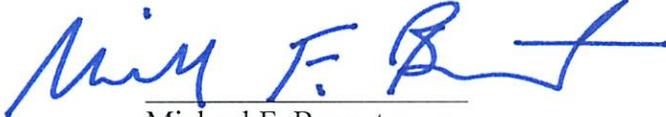
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United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
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United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
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