

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House of Representatives
H232, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
House of Representatives
H107, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer,

As our Congress enters a transitional period and Democrats re-gain the Majority, we must make our top priorities known to our body of government and to the American people. While Congress passed several bills to increase access to treatment and recovery, improve state prescription drug monitoring programs, increase access to medication assisted treatment, support research efforts, and expand availability of naloxone, many of our states are seeing an increase in overdose death rates.

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the final 2017 data from the National Vital Statistics System regarding mortality that tells a dire story of the tragic human toll of this crisis. Between 2016 and 2017, the age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths increased by 9.6%. In 2017, there were 70,237 drug overdose deaths. Of that number, 47,600 were opioid overdose deaths. Also, drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl increased by 46% between 2016 and 2017.

While this paints a bleak picture of the nation, several states experienced the brunt of the epidemic. According to the CDC, the following states experienced increases in overdose deaths between 2016 and 2017:

- Ohio increased from 39.1 deaths per 100,000 to 46.3 deaths per 100,000
- Pennsylvania increased from 37.9 deaths per 100,000 to 44.3 deaths per 100,000
- Kentucky increased from 33.5 deaths per 100,000 to 37.1 deaths per 100,000
- West Virginia increased from 52 deaths per 100,000 to 57.8 deaths per 100,000
- Maine increased from 28.7 deaths per 100,000 to 34.4 deaths per 100,000
- Indiana increased from 24 deaths per 100,000 to 29.4 deaths per 100,000
- Delaware increased from 30.8 deaths per 100,000 to 37 deaths per 100,000

New Hampshire was the only state that experienced a decrease from 39 deaths per 100,000 in 2016 to 37 deaths per 100,000 in 2017, dropping the state out of the top five from 2016.

In 2017, overdose death rates in 24 states surpassed the national average of 21.7 per 100,000. Those states and territories, excluding the 7 listed above, include Arizona, Connecticut, Washington, DC, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, and Vermont.

At a time when our state and local partners are begging for federal assistance to combat the opioid crisis in their communities, Congress must answer the call through increased resources, creative solutions, and with

more legislative staff. Dedicated staff across House committees capable of analyzing both the larger federal need and specifics from states and districts is necessary at this point.

People across this country are suffering and need more relief than our local governments can provide. As members from the states impacted by this crisis the most, we see people every day who need our help. We hope that you will take into consideration our proposal to make countering the opioid crisis a top priority for the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,


Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress


Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress


Donald Norcross
Member of Congress


David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress


André Carson
Member of Congress


Ted Deutch
Member of Congress


Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Marcia L. Fudge
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Joyce Beatty
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Tim Ryan
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Brendan Boyle
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Matt Cartwright
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Conor Lamb
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Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
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Albio Sires
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Bill Pascrell Jr.
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Donald M. Payne, Jr.
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
Member of Congress




Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



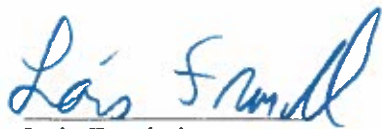
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Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress




Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



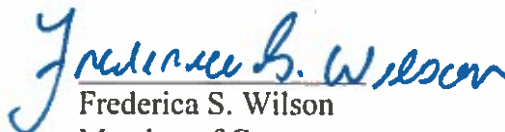
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William R. Keating
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Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
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Tom O'Halleran

Tom O'Halleran
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David Price

David E. Price
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Ann Kirkpatrick

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Fred Golden

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Greg Stanton

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Jamie Raskin

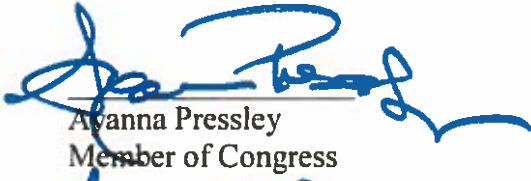
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



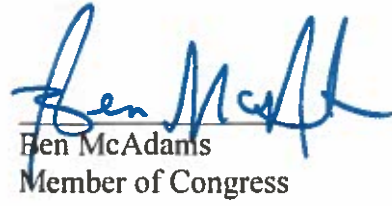
Andy Levin
Member of Congress



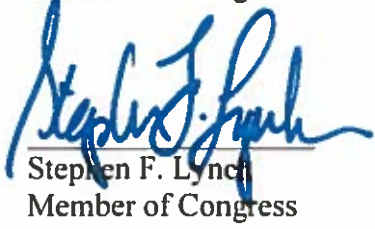
Andy Kim
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
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Stephen F. Lynch
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