

## United States Senate

April 14, 2015

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Chairman  
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski,

As the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies works to allocate federal funds for FY 2016, I urge you to prioritize support for efforts that will help to address the ongoing prescription opioid abuse and heroin use epidemic facing our country. Sadly, opioid abuse and addiction remain serious concerns in Indiana and across the country. Opioid related deaths in my state have more than tripled over the past decade, and nationwide, deaths resulting from prescription painkillers nearly quadrupled from 1999 to 2013. Deaths related to heroin use have also risen dramatically, increasing 39% between 2012 and 2013.

Our cities and states are taking steps to treat addiction, prevent young people from turning to drugs, and crack down on the dealers and cartels that profit from the illicit drug trade; however, more support is greatly needed. Federal funding fills critical gaps where state and local efforts alone are not enough to tackle the significant challenges many communities face when dealing with a complex problem like opioid addiction.

A successful strategy to combat prescription opioid abuse and heroin use will require a comprehensive approach that draws on the support of local, state, and federal resources. This includes supporting prevention programs; expanding access to treatment for those who are struggling with addiction; equipping more first responders with naloxone to save lives; continuing to support state efforts to enhance prescription drug monitoring programs; and providing more resources for law enforcement—particularly those that fund collaborations between federal, state, and local officers, and support vital intelligence operations that work to disrupt drug cartels and interdict drugs being trafficked across our borders.

I fully appreciate that we have limited federal resources and face numerous demands. As you undertake the task of allocating funds for the coming year, I hope that you will consider programs that deal with this growing public health crisis among your priorities and ask that you support balanced efforts to address prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Donnelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" being particularly prominent.

Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator