

United States Senate

April 14, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

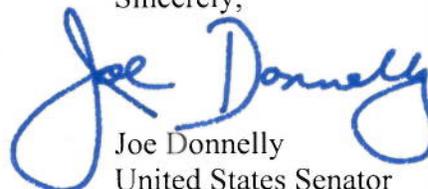
As the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies works to allocate federal funds for FY 2016, I urge you to prioritize support for efforts that will help to address the ongoing prescription opioid abuse and heroin use epidemic facing our country. Sadly, opioid 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,



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator