

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 13, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S. 128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S. 128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Blunt and Ranking Members Mikulski and Murray:

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the nation's prescription drug abuse and heroin epidemic. With the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, we are writing to request that any final appropriations package include adequate resources for critical substance abuse prevention and treatment services. In particular, we are seeking funding at the highest possible level for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) – programs located within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA).

As you know, the nation is in the midst of an opioid abuse crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heroin use has more than doubled among young adults ages 18 to 25 over the past 10 years. SAMHSA has found that the number of individuals in the U.S. aged 12 or older who are using opioids non-medically has reached approximately 4.5 million. These disturbing trends have resulted in tragic results for far too many Americans. According to the CDC, 17,000 people lost their lives to a prescription drug overdose and more than 8,000 lives were lost to a heroin overdose.

The opioid epidemic has also placed incredible pressure on our nation's treatment system. According to the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

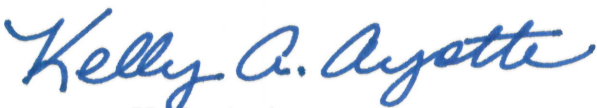
(NASADAD), 37 States reported increases in treatment admissions for heroin during the past two years. Further, admissions for opioid pain reliever abuse treatment increased by a staggering 500 percent from 2000 to 2012 according to SAMHSA. It is clear that more must be done to support effective treatment services and prevention programs.

The SAPT Block Grant, a formula grant distributed to all States and Territories, provided treatment services for over 1.6 million Americans in fiscal year (FY) 2014. During the same year, of clients discharged from treatment, over 72 percent were abstinent from illicit drugs and nearly 82 percent were abstinent from alcohol. The prevention funds included in the SAPT Block grant represent 70 percent of the primary prevention funding managed by State substance abuse agencies. Unfortunately, over the past 10 years, SAPT Block Grant funding has not kept up with inflation, resulting in a 25 percent decrease in actual funding.

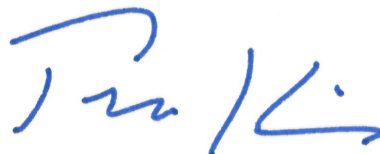
The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) provides critical leadership across the federal government to promote evidence based practices. A cornerstone initiative within CSAT is the Targeted Capacity Expansion (TCE) program which helps States and communities target urgent, unmet needs. In FY 2014, Congress approved \$11 million through the TCE program to help expand access to medications for the treatment of opioid use disorders. Over the past 5 years, however, funding for the CSAT has been reduced by approximately \$44 million.

With the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, we urge the Committee to revisit initial proposed funding reductions for the SAPT Block Grant and CSAT as the appropriations process moves forward. In particular, we urge you to take action that would maintain the highest possible level of funding for these key programs. We recognize the continued fiscal challenges facing our country, however, with our nation currently facing an opioid abuse epidemic, we believe it is critical to make sensible investments in effective programs that are crucial to helping save lives, reunite families, and strengthen communities. Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you as the FY 16 appropriations process moves forward.

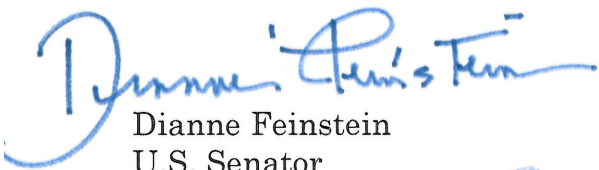
Sincerely,

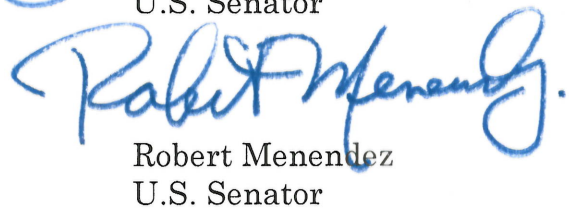


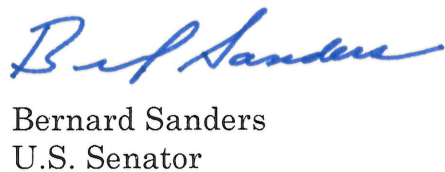
Kelly A. Ayotte
U.S. Senator

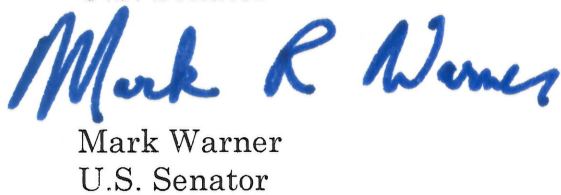


Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator

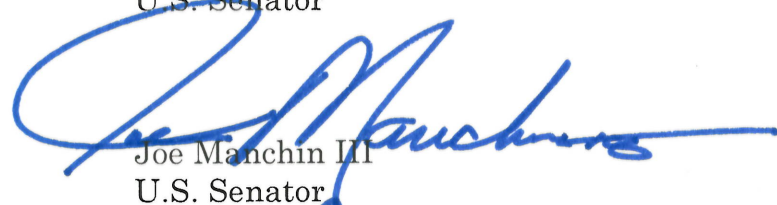

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

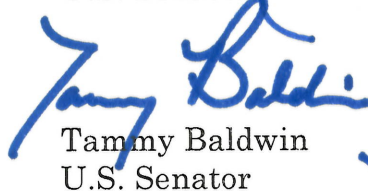

Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator

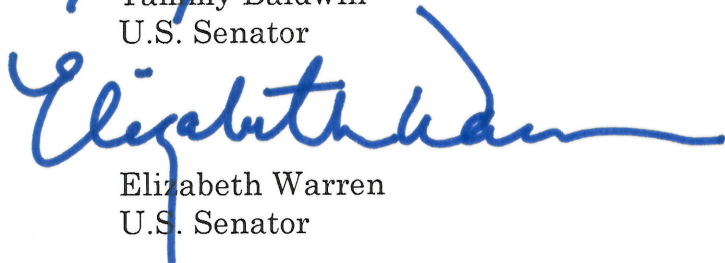

Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator

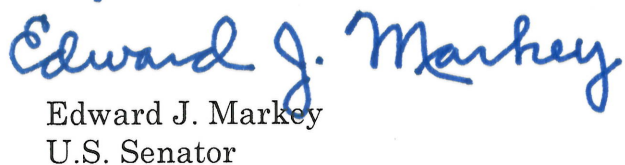

Mark Warner
U.S. Senator

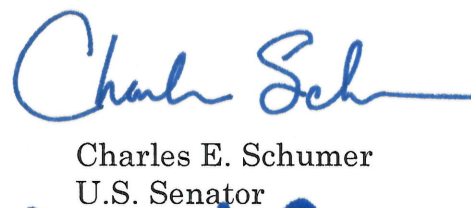

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator

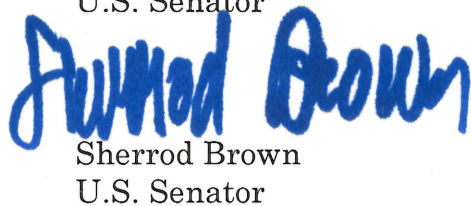

Joe Manchin III
U.S. Senator

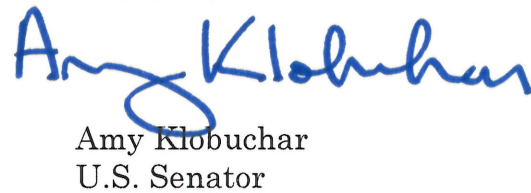

Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator

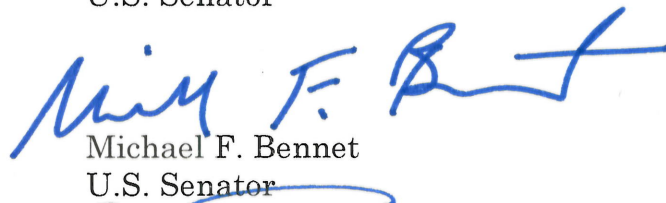

Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator


Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator


Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator


Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

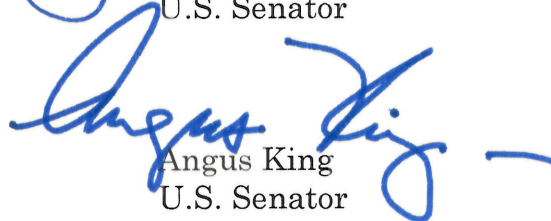

Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator


Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator


Al Franken
U.S. Senator


Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator


Joe Donnelly
U.S. Senator


Angus King
U.S. Senator


Dan Sullivan
U.S. Senator