

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

November 9, 2015

Thomas Frieden, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden,

As United States Senators, we have seen firsthand the devastating effects of prescription drug abuse on individuals, families, and communities in our states, and we believe that encouraging the responsible prescribing of opioids is critical to stopping this epidemic. That is why we strongly support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recently released Draft Guidelines for Opioid Prescribing.

In 2013, health care providers wrote 207 million prescriptions for prescription opioid painkillers, almost quadruple the number written in 1999. This is enough for almost every American to have a bottle of pills. According to the CDC, this increase has come without a corresponding increase in reported pain. It has, however, led to a dramatic rise in the number of overdose deaths due to prescription opioids.

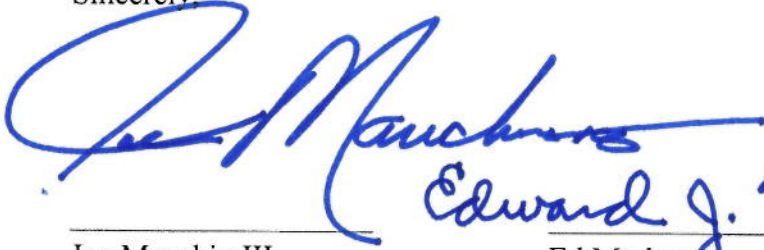
More than 16,000 people died from a prescription opioid overdose in 2013; that's 44 Americans every day. Nationally, the number of drug overdose deaths has quadrupled since 1999. Too many people in our communities are losing their lives, families, and futures to prescription opioids.

As you know, under the CDC's guidelines, physicians would be encouraged to recommend non-pharmacological therapy as the preferred treatment for chronic, non-cancer pain, prescribe the lowest dose and the fewest number of pills considered effective for the patient, and regularly evaluate the risks to the patient from the prescription opioids they are taking. These and the other guidelines reflect the latest science and represent a commonsense approach that will help us reduce opioid addiction and diversion and save lives without compromising access to needed treatment.

The United States makes up only 4.6% of the world's population, but consumes approximately 80% of its opioids. This simply doesn't make any sense. The CDC's draft guidelines for prescribing opioids are a critical tool that will help us reverse this dangerous trend.

We are committed to doing everything in our power to bring this epidemic under control because our communities are hurting. The problem will only grow worse if we fail to act. We applaud the CDC for developing prescribing guidelines and for your efforts in the fight to end prescription drug abuse. We strongly urge you to maintain this commonsense approach when you release the final guidelines early next year. We also encourage you to work with providers, stakeholders, and other agencies to implement the final guidelines to ensure that our entire health care community has access to the latest scientific tools needed to deliver high-quality care.

Sincerely,

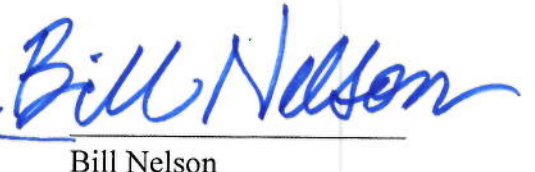
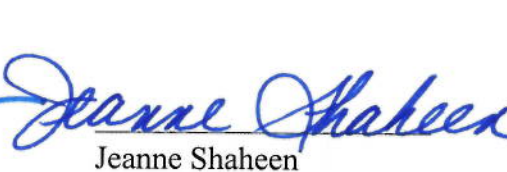
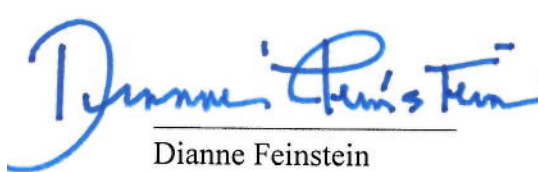


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United States Senator



Ed Markey
United States Senator

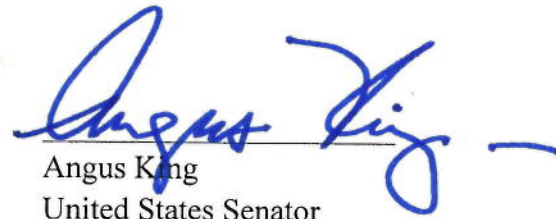
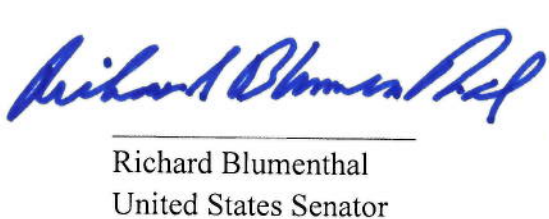
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