

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

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

April 21, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

As the senior Senator from West Virginia, I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of opioid abuse on individuals, families, and communities in my state and around the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), we lost 18,893 people in 2014 to a prescription opioid overdose and 10,574 people to a heroin overdose. Since 1999, we've lost almost 200,000 Americans to prescription opioid abuse. As Members of Congress, it is our duty to do everything in our power to stop this deadly epidemic. That is why I urge the House of Representatives to move quickly to consider legislation to prevent and treat prescription opioid and heroin addiction.

In March, the Senate passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act by a vote of 94-1. As you know, this bipartisan bill would significantly expand prevention and educational efforts, improve the availability of naloxone to reduce overdose deaths, strengthen access to effective, evidence-based treatment programs, and more. It represents a strong first step in our fight to end the opioid abuse and overdose death epidemic, and I hope that the House of Representatives will take up this legislation as soon as possible.

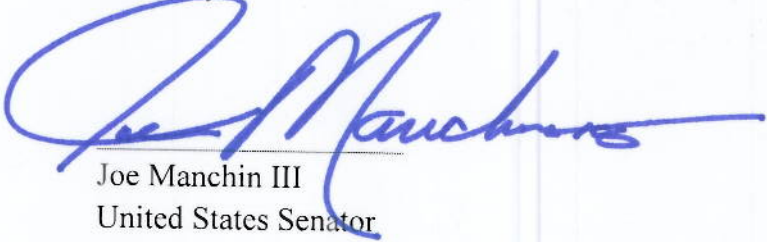
I hope that the House will also consider additional legislation to allow us to address this crisis on all fronts. I have introduced several bills that would strengthen our efforts to both prevent and treat opioid addiction. These bills include:

- *The Changing the Culture of the FDA Act (S. 2543)*: This bill amends the FDA's mission statement to include the agency's responsibility for addressing the public health impact of the opioid epidemic.
- *Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (S. 1431/H.R. 4697)*: This bipartisan bill would improve education about opioid abuse for consumers and physicians and provide assistance to states and the federal government to reduce opioid abuse, diversion, and deaths.
- *FDA Accountability for Public Safety Act (S. 954)*: This bipartisan bill would require the FDA to seek the advice of its experts on the advisory committee when the FDA considers new, dangerous opioid medications.
- *Promoting Responsible Opioid Prescribing Act (S. 2758/H.R. 4499)*: This bill, which I introduced with Senator Johnson, would eliminate a perverse incentive that physicians have to prescribe unnecessary opioid medications.

I will also soon be introducing legislation to protect those recovering from addiction by ensuring that medical professionals have access to information about a patient's addiction if the patient consents. This is in response to the tragic death of Jessie Grubb, who overdosed when she was sent home with 50 oxycodone after a surgery despite making it very clear to her attending physicians that she was a recovering heroin addict. Finally, I am working on a legislative proposal that would impose a small fee on opioids and use those funds to supplement the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, which provides states with the necessary resources to expand access to substance abuse treatment.

Each of these bills would strengthen our efforts to bring the opioid crisis under control. Our communities are hurting, and the problem will only grow worse if we fail to act. I urge you to move as quickly as possible to pass legislation to help the millions of Americans who are suffering from opioid addiction.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Cc:

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
The Honorable John Conyers
The Honorable Fred Upton
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Kevin Brady
The Honorable Sander Levin