

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 31, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS and Education
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS and Education
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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

Thank you for your commitment to strengthening federal efforts to address the scourge of substance abuse and the current opioid abuse epidemic. Addiction and overdoses are claiming lives and destroying families across the United States.

President Obama signed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) on July 22, 2016. This legislation was crafted and supported on a bipartisan basis and was developed with the input and guidance of members of the Administration and the advocacy community. CARA is supported by a contingency of national stakeholders in the public health, law enforcement, criminal justice, and drug policy fields. CARA was designed to fight prescription opioid abuse and heroin use holistically – by promoting prevention and education, expanding treatment options, and supporting recovery.

Now that the CARA authorization measure is the law of the land, we must fully fund these new initiatives. In light of the deadly heroin and prescription drug epidemic in this country, we urge the Appropriations Committee to fully fund the programs and initiatives in the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act in the continuing resolution for FY17. It is critical that we work together to ensure that the \$181 million authorized by CARA will be available for states and communities to expand prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts for the millions of Americans who are affected by substance use disorders.

Between April 2014 and July 2015, we hosted five bicameral forums highlighting different aspects of addiction and recovery—including the science of addiction, addiction and the criminal justice process, women and addiction, the collateral consequences of addiction, addiction and youth, and treatment and recovery in the veteran community. Each of these forums brought together experts and practitioners from the prevention, treatment, law enforcement, and recovery communities to share best practices in their fields from across the United States. Michael Botticelli, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, joined us for several of these events.

In addition to hearing from stakeholders at these forums, the sponsors worked closely with a “working group” of organizations to craft legislation that would address the substance abuse crisis in

a comprehensive manner. The working group consisted of over 100 organizations—including the National Council on Behavioral Health, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Major County Sheriffs, Faces and Voices of Recovery, and many others. The objective was to write a bill designed to incentivize evidence-based best practices and promote collaboration among all too often silo-ed areas of expertise. We must ensure that our response to addiction includes funding for the targeted programs in each of the four CARA “pillars” of prevention and education, treatment, law enforcement efforts, and recovery.

More than 120 Americans a day, more than two Americans every hour, die from lethal overdoses. Therefore, time is of the essence. We can, and should, come together again to tackle the opioid abuse crisis devastating our communities by fully funding CARA in the continuing resolution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rob Portman
United States Senator