

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

March 26, 2018

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
United States Department of Health and Human Services  
330 C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20416

The Honorable Elinore F. McCance-Katz, M.D., Ph.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use  
United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
5600 Fischers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Secretary Azar and Assistant Secretary McCance-Katz:

We appreciate your commitment to fighting the opioid epidemic. We look forward to working with the Trump Administration to implement the health-related portion of the \$3.3 billion increase in opioid funding in the FY18 Omnibus Appropriations Act. We write today as a united delegation to stress the importance of prioritizing funding for states like New Hampshire that have been hit the hardest by the opioid epidemic and to ask that you work with us to ensure that New Hampshire receives a large enough proportion of federal funding to address its needs.

As President Trump said in his remarks during his visit to Manchester earlier this month, the sad reality is that opioid-related overdoses kill 116 Americans every single day, and as he also noted, the overdose mortality rate in New Hampshire is double the national average. Studies<sup>1</sup> indicate that almost 10 percent of our population in New Hampshire suffers from a substance use disorder. New Hampshire's mortality rate has continued to grow over the past few years, from 26.2 per 100,000 in 2014 to 34.3 per 100,000 in 2015 to 39 per 100,000 in 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Drug Overdose Data.<sup>2</sup>

As the President also noted in his remarks, defeating this epidemic is going to require an all-hands on deck response from our state, local and federal agencies. In order to turn the tide of this epidemic, especially in one of the hardest-hit states, we need sustained resources to support our first responders, doctors, treatment providers and law enforcement officials.

Congress has taken steps most recently in the FY18 Omnibus Appropriations Act to tackle the opioid epidemic. We are glad that the bill contains the additional allocation of \$1 billion on top of the \$500 million already provided through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act authorization for FY18,

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Misuse in New Hampshire: An Update on Costs to the State's Economy and Initial Impacts of Public Policies to Reduce Them. Study prepared for New Futures. May 2017

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>

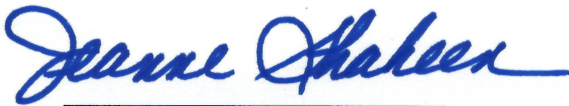
including especially the 15 percent (roughly \$142 million) hardest-hit state set-aside funding. As you know, your agency has jurisdiction over developing the formula for the hardest-hit state set aside. As you develop this formula, we encourage you to ensure that this formula is targeted, as directed by the State Opioid Response Grants section of the FY18 Omnibus.

We urge your Administration to consider the following suggestions while determining how best to prioritize hardest-hit states to ensure they receive adequate resources through the set-aside formula.

1. Ensure that the list of states eligible for the set-aside enhancement grants is short and targeted, in order to maximize funding effectiveness for states that need it the most.
2. Establish a \$10 million minimum for grants from the set-aside enhancement funds.
3. Distribute the set-aside funds to states based on a sliding scale according to mortality rate instead of distributing funds evenly amongst a list of eligible states.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss the allocation of the set-aside for states with the highest mortality rates. We look forward to working with you on this important issue, because, as the President said in his speech in New Hampshire, "failure is not an option. Addiction is not our future. We will liberate our country from this crisis."

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
U.S. Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan  
U.S. Senator



Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress