

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2012

New York State Assembly
Albany, New York 12248

New York State Senate
Albany, New York 12247

Members of the New York State Legislature,

We are writing to bring your attention to a dangerous and growing crisis affecting families in every corner of this state. In urban, suburban, rural, upstate and downstate New York, prescription drug abuse is an epidemic that is reshaping our definition of addiction, and one that demands the attention of our communities, law enforcement officials, and legislators.

Between 2007 and 2010, the rates of admission to treatment programs for prescription drug abuse increased by 45 percent. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, prescription drug abuse is the country's second most prevalent illegal drug problem, and recent reports and studies have documented corresponding data trends in New York State. For example:

- Oxycodone prescriptions increased by 66 percent in New York City from 2007 to 2009;
- In Buffalo, New York's largest methadone clinic outside of New York City is reorganizing its service to accommodate an increase in care needed to treat the growing number of addicted mothers and their newborns;
- On Long Island, both crisis and non-crisis admissions to drug treatment that involve opiates other than heroin and cocaine have increased at alarming rates. And between 2004 and 2009, the number of deaths due to the toxic effects of prescription opioids more than tripled in Nassau County.

Given the magnitude of the problem, we urge you to support Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's proposed state legislation called the "Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing Act," or "I-STOP." The legislation would establish a program connecting doctors and pharmacists to a real time, online database to track the prescription and dispensing of frequently abused drugs. Prescription drug monitoring programs currently operate in 43 states, and it is time for New York to modernize its approach to addressing this metastasizing crisis for our families.

In addition to providing health care providers and pharmacists with centralized information to avoid overprescribing, I-STOP will result in preventing drug trafficking as well as identifying and treat patients who seek to abuse prescription drugs. This much-needed enhancement of the state's prescription drug monitoring program will assist in patient care, and also help crack down on 'doctor shopping,' the practice of frequenting several different doctors and pharmacies for prescription drugs. With real-time information, physicians and pharmacists will have the necessary tools to track potential abuses, and stop those who enable and profit off of the illegitimate use of prescribed drugs.

I-STOP would also require practitioners, pharmacists and law enforcement officials to complete continuing education programs on the proper uses of the substance reporting system. The proposed legislation prohibits the disclosure of all the data collected in the online database, unless authorized by law.

The Attorney General's I-STOP legislation is the solution New York State needs to begin tackling the prescription drug epidemic head on. On behalf of families across the state, we urge you to pass this legislation before another life is lost.

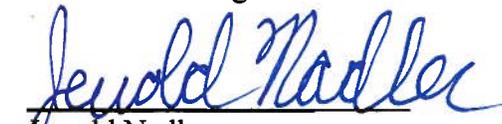
Sincerely,


Michael Grimm
Member of Congress

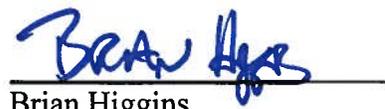

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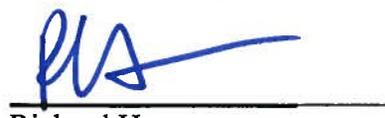

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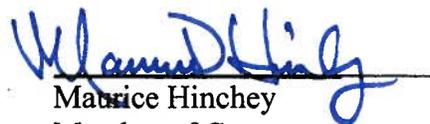

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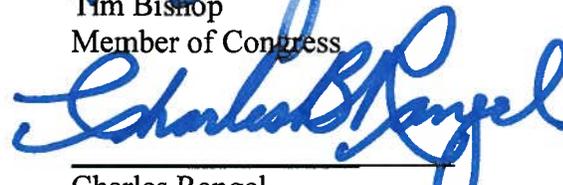

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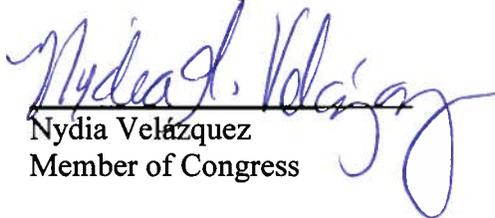

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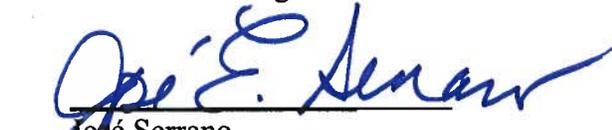

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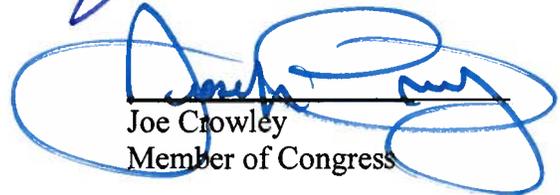

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cc: Sheldon Silver, Speaker of the New York State Assembly
Dean Skelos, New York State Senate Majority Leader


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