

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell,

As you are aware the United States is facing a severe opioid abuse epidemic. More than 60 people die per day in the United States due to an overdose of prescription drugs. In 2011, prescription opioid abuse resulted in more than 400,000 emergency department visits and cost health insurers an estimated \$72 billion annually in medical costs. We support the recent announcement made by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regarding a targeted initiative aimed at reducing prescription opioid and heroin related overdose, death and dependence.

It is our understanding that a necessary component of slowing and ultimately ending the opioid epidemic is to focus on improved education for prescribers of opioids. It has been conveyed to us that appropriate pain management, knowing when and how to prescribe opioids and recognizing early signs of addiction is critical to addressing this public health concern. The HHS announcement includes prescriber education as one of the three priority areas: "Providing training and educational resources, including updated prescriber guidelines, to assist health professionals in making informed prescribing decisions and address the over-prescribing of opioids."

As the ongoing epidemic continues to be of concern, we urge HHS to quickly and efficiently work with medical and addiction experts to create stringent requirements for prescribers of opioids. As Members of Congress dedicated to improving the health of our nation, we would like to stay informed of the steps taken by HHS as they work with Congress to create bipartisan legislation to address the issue of safe opioid prescribing. We appreciate your time and willingness to work together.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Richard Hanna
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress