

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 2015

Donald H. Polk, DO
Chair
Federation of State Medical Boards
400 Fuller Wiser Road
Suite 300
Euless, TX 76039

Dear Dr. Polk,

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 Federation of State Medical Boards' (FSMB) recognition of this epidemic and the efforts taken to implement model guidelines for state medical boards and other health care regulatory agencies in 1998, 2004 and 2013.

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. The FSMB model policy addresses this issue through guidelines on appropriate pain management and whether the use of opioid analgesics is necessary and if so, how to monitor their use.

Since introduction of the first model policy on opioid analgesics in 1998, 45 state medical boards have adopted the guidelines and of those, 11 adopted the most recent 2013 guidelines. However, the ongoing epidemic continues to be of concern and indicates the need for updated and stricter guidelines.

The FSMB needs to utilize new research to create more stringent guidelines for opioid analgesics. Furthermore, the Federation must communicate to their member boards the importance of adopting or updating their guidelines to ensure they adequately address this public health concern. Congress is increasingly interested in this issue and there is building consensus that education standards need to be tightened.

We appreciate your time on this matter and look forward to working with you to improve the health of our nation.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Richard Hanna
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress