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## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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August 29, 2018

Hon. Elinore F. McCance-Katz, MD, PhD  
Assistant Secretary  
Mental Health and Substance Use  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Assistant Secretary McCance-Katz:

As this epidemic continues to impact families and communities across the nation, it is important to recognize the severity of the crisis in states that do not have the infrastructure to effectively combat the proliferation of opioid and substance use disorder. The funding New Hampshire is eligible to receive as part of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) State Opioid Response Grants, first posted on June 14, 2018, represents the resources necessary for New Hampshire to combat this crisis. I applaud SAMHSA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for adhering to congressional intent and recognizing New Hampshire as a state in great need.

Consequently, I write in support of the State of New Hampshire's application, dated August 13, 2018, for two-year funding from SAMHSA totaling \$45.8 million. SAMHSA's prospective award to NH represents an important down payment for the development of treatment and recovery infrastructure our state needs to effectively combat this crisis. Further, I request expeditious approval of New Hampshire's application and that SAMHSA provide New Hampshire all technical assistance available to help its efforts to establish an effective, state-wide hub and spoke model for these services, including lessons learned and best practices from similar efforts undertaken by other states.

In 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a spike in New Hampshire drug overdose fatalities, jumping from 24<sup>th</sup> in per capita deaths to third. In 2015, the crisis worsened; not only did New Hampshire become second in the nation in drug deaths per capita, it was the leader in fentanyl-related drug overdose mortality. This phenomenon foreshadowed the national rise of fentanyl and synthetic opioid overdose fatalities first recognized as the primary driver of opioid mortality by the CDC in December 2017.

Unfortunately, the same December 2017 CDC data further demonstrated a rise in deaths in New Hampshire. Despite New Hampshire's ranking for overdose deaths per capita falling to third, the CDC reported that the Granite State saw a "significant increase" in drug mortality.

The State's proposal reflects the needs of the greater New Hampshire community. It conceives of a hub-and-spoke model to be both a coordinating entity for resources and the framework for a more comprehensive treatment and recovery system. This model of care is not only necessary for the delivery of life-saving services during the perilous moments caused by this epidemic, it would also empower the Granite State to effectively respond to the next drug crisis. Local and state organizations are often first to recognize an impending crisis and ensuring those on the frontlines have the support needed to respond will save lives and potentially prevent future crises from reaching epidemic proportions. Without this investment, our communities are placed at-risk today and in the future.

Thank you for your efforts to address this public health emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann McLane Kuster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

ANN MCLANE KUSTER  
Member of Congress