

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

Thank you for your leadership on the nation's opioid epidemic. As you consider fiscal year 2019 spending priorities within the bill funding the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, we are writing to request the highest possible funding for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant, which is the cornerstone of States' substance abuse treatment, prevention, and recovery systems.

Any effective strategy designed to address prescription opioid and heroin addiction must include a strong investment in the SAPT Block Grant. In 2016, 11.5 million Americans aged 12 and older misused opioid pain relievers, and roughly 950,000 individuals used heroin. Individuals who misuse prescription opioid painkillers are forty times more likely to be addicted to heroin, and prior prescription drug use appears to have been a common initial step on the pathway to heroin addiction, with 80 percent of new heroin users previously misusing prescription opioids. Heroin can also be laced with even more potent substances, such as fentanyl, further increasing overdose risk. In 2016, more than 63,000 Americans died of a drug overdose, and total of 42,249 of those deaths were caused by an opioid.

The opioid epidemic has placed incredible pressure on our nation's treatment system. In 2014, thirty percent of all treatment admissions were for prescription opioids or heroin. In 2015, 39 States reported an increase in admissions for heroin addiction compared to the prior year while over half of States across the country saw an increase in admissions for prescription opioids compared to the previous year. It is clear more must be done to support effective treatment and prevention programs.

The SAPT Block Grant, distributed by formula to all States and Territories, funds services that result in exceptional outcomes. In FY 2017, SAPT funding directly served 1.5 million Americans. Of clients discharged from SAPT Block Grant-funded treatment programs, 69 percent were abstinent from illicit drugs, 84 percent were abstinent from alcohol, 93 percent had no criminal justice involvement, and 88 percent had permanent housing.

A strong commitment to the SAPT Block Grant represents a strong commitment to primary prevention. In addition to treatment services, the SAPT Block Grant includes prevention funds that represent 70 percent of primary prevention funding managed by State substance abuse agencies. In some States, the SAPT investment accounts for 100 percent of substance abuse prevention dollars.

Unfortunately, SAPT Block Grant funding has not kept up with inflation, resulting in a 29 percent—or \$542 million—decrease in actual funding since 2006.

We urge you to provide for the highest possible level of funding for the SAPT Block Grant as work progresses on FY 2019 appropriations. Sensible investments in the SAPT Block Grant will ultimately save money while strengthening communities, keeping families together, and most importantly saving lives.

Sincerely,



Rep. Paul Tonko



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Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham



Rep. Alma S. Adams, Ph. D



Rep. Daniel T. Kildee



Rep. A. Donald McEachin



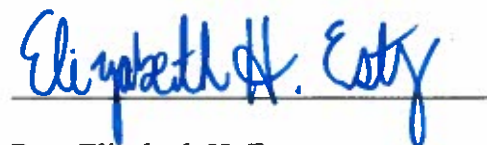
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Rep. Mark DeSaulnier



Rep. Ann McLane Kuster



Rep. Elizabeth H. Esty



Rep. David Scott



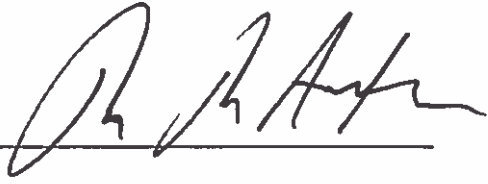
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Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy, III



Rep. Tom MacArthur



Rep. Raja Krisnamoorthi



Rep. Raul Ruiz



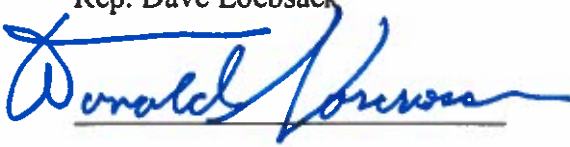
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Rep. Ron Kind



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Rep. Donald Norcross



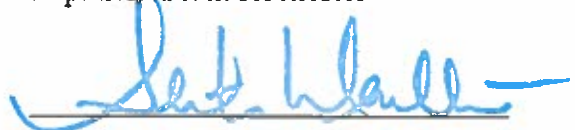
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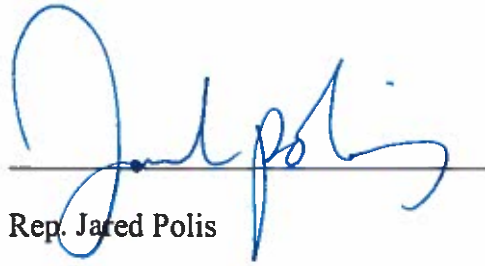
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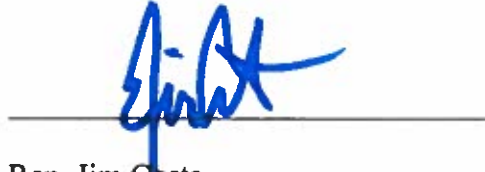
Rep. Kathy Castor



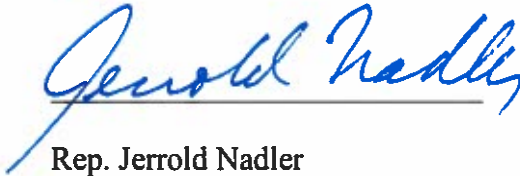
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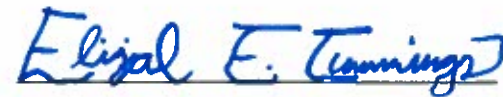
Rep. Jerrold Nadler



Rep. Peter A. DeFazio



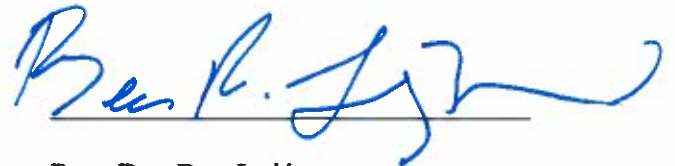
Rep. Danny K. Davis



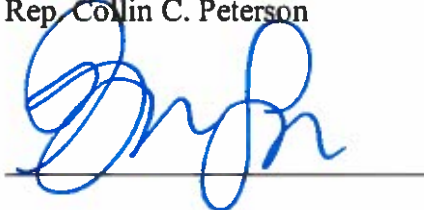
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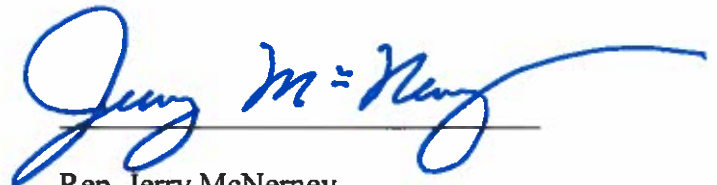
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Rep. Ben Ray Lujan



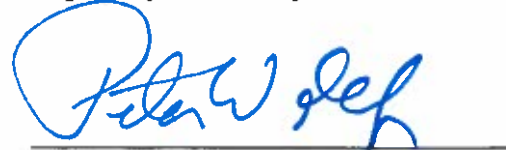
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