
CO-SPONSOR THE OPIOID ABUSE DETERRENCE, RESEARCH, AND RECOVERY ACT

Dear Colleague:

Opioid addiction is an epidemic that is tearing families and communities apart. Drug overdose deaths are estimated to have exceeded 59,000 in 2016, and most projections indicate that this number will worsen in 2017.¹ Recent studies suggest that 90 people in our hometowns and communities are dying every day due to this crisis, and many more are unable to secure employment because of the toll of addiction.² With evidence suggesting that nearly 80 percent of individuals addicted to heroin started out on opioid pain relievers, the link is clear that opioid prescriptions are driving this epidemic.³

To address this crisis, we are introducing the **Opioid Abuse Deterrence, Research, and Recovery Act**. This measure places a limit on a patient's first opioid prescription for acute-pain to no more than 7-days, except in cases of traumatic injury, chronic conditions, cancer-care, end of life care, palliative care, or based on a physician's recommendation. In addition, this measure would analyze several factors that might have contributed to the opioid epidemic and study the implications of enacting such prescription limits and what alternatives might be available to better treat a patient's pain.

This legislation builds upon the efforts of several states including North Carolina and Ohio, which have recognized the importance of limiting opioid prescriptions by enacting or introducing similar policies that strengthen these patient protections.

In early 2017, North Carolina passed legislation to strengthen requirements for doctors and pharmacists to use a statewide controlled substance database and curb the epidemic levels of opioid abuse in the state.⁴ This bill limits prescribers to 5-day supplies of a patient's first prescription of opioids suffering from "acute pain," and any further prescription would require a subsequent consultation with a certified practitioner.

Ohio currently leads the nation in prescription opioid overdose deaths.⁵ In 2016, at least 4,149 Ohioans died from unintentional drug overdoses.⁶ Within the same year, roughly 20% of the state's population, over 2.3 million Ohioans, were prescribed opioids. Ohio has enacted a 7-day limit on initial opioid prescriptions as one of many steps to address this epidemic.

Congress and the Administration have dedicated resources and funding to address this crisis, but there is still more to be done.⁷ When paired with effective substance abuse treatment and support from local communities, we believe that this legislation can begin to stem the tide of addiction by reversing the trend of unnecessarily overprescribing opioids. We urge you to cosponsor the **Opioid Abuse Deterrence, Research, and Recovery Act** to join in the fight to prevent future addictions and more overdoses.

Sincerely,

Mark Meadows
Member of Congress

Jim Renacci
Member of Congress

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Understanding the Epidemic,” August 30, 2017, (<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>).

² Jeanna Smielek, “Goldman Economists See Drug Epidemic Taking Toll on U.S. Economy,” *Bloomberg*, July 6, 2017, (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-06/goldman-economists-see-drug-epidemic-taking-toll-on-u-s-economy>).

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Opioid Overdoses,” August 29, 2017, (<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/>); National Safety Council, “Prescription Nation 2016: Addressing America’s Drug Epidemic,” accessed September 26, 2017, (<http://www.nsc.org/RxDrugOverdoseDocuments/Prescription-Nation-2016-American-Drug-Epidemic.pdf>).

⁴ H.243, the Strengthen Opioid Misuse Prevention (STOP) Act,” General Assembly of North Carolina, April 10, 2017, (<http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H243v3.pdf>); North Carolina Office of the Governor, “Governor Cooper Continues Fight Against Opioid Crisis, Signs STOP Act into Law,” Press Release, June 29, 2017, (<https://governor.nc.gov/news/governor-cooper-continues-fight-against-opioid-crisis-signs-stop-act-law>).

⁵ Kaiser Family Foundation, “Prescription Opioid Overdose Deaths and Death Rate per 100,000 Population (Age-Adjusted)” (<https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/prescription-opioid-overdose-deaths-and-death-rate-per-100000-population-age-adjusted/>).

⁶ Catherine Candisky, “Overdose deaths continue to soar in Ohio,” *Dispatch.com* May 28, 2017, (<http://dispatch.com/news/20170528/overdose-deaths-continue-to-soar-in-ohio>).

⁷ Tom Price and Kellyanne Conway, “All hands needed on deck to turn the tides of the opioid crisis,” *City and State Pennsylvania*, September 23, 2017, (<http://www.cityandstatepa.com/content/all-hands-needed-deck-turn-tide-against-opioid-crisis>).