Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2016

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you know, heroin use and prescription opioid abuse are having devastating effects on public health and safety in communities across our country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drug overdoses now surpass automobile accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death for Americans ages 25 to 64. Every day, more than 129 Americans die as a result of drug overdose – and over half of these drug overdoses are related to prescription drug use. Though research conducted at the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and other organizations show addiction to be a treatable disease of the brain, only about ten percent of those who need treatment actually receive it.

In light of the growing challenges posed by the opioid epidemic across the country, we write to express our strong support for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 funding of programs that would support the comprehensive and integrated strategies for addressing opioid abuse. We must act this year to ensure that our law enforcement officials, care givers, mental health experts, and others have the resources necessary to address this crisis in a comprehensive way.

A critical element in addressing this crisis is funding for vital provisions included in the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 (H.R.953/S.524). This bipartisan legislation was developed over the past two and a half years through a cooperative process involving key national stakeholders in the public health, law enforcement, criminal justice, and drug policy fields, and is designed to fight prescription opioid abuse and heroin use holistically – from expanding prevention to supporting recovery.

Among other objectives, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) would:

- Expand prevention and educational efforts-particularly aimed at teens, parents and other caretakers, and aging populations-to prevent prescription opioid abuse and the use of heroin.
- Expand the availability of the overdose reversal drug naloxone to law enforcement agencies and other first responders.
- Expand resources to promptly identify and treat individuals suffering from substance use disorders in the criminal justice system.
- Expand disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications to keep them out of the hands of children and adolescents.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

- Launch an evidence-based prescription opioid and heroin treatment and intervention program to expand best practices throughout the country.
- Launch a medication assisted treatment and intervention demonstration program.
- Strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs to help states monitor and track prescription drug diversion and to help at-risk individuals access services.

In addition to the provisions in CARA, we ask that you provide robust funding to several other areas that will aid in prevention, treatment, and recovery. These include High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, drug free community grants, drug court grants, alternative treatment grants, and the National Health Service Corps.

We must provide the resources and incentives necessary for states and local governments to expand treatment, prevention, and recovery efforts for the millions of Americans who are affected by substance use disorders.

Only through a comprehensive approach that leverages evidence-based law enforcement initiatives, treatment, and support for recovery can we reverse the devastating impact this crisis is having in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank C. Guinta
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

James F. Sensenbrenner Jr.
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

Lamar Smith
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress

Steve Chabot
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

Patrick Meehan
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Robert J. Dold
Member of Congress

Sean Duffy
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

Sander Levin
Member of Congress

Richard L. Hanna
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress

Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

Peter T. King
Member of Congress

Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress

Doug Collins
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Ryan A. Costello
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

Stephen Knight
Member of Congress

James A. Himes
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell Jr.
Member of Congress

Michael G. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Daniel M. Donovan Jr.
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress

Curt Clawson
Member of Congress

Christopher P. Gibson
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Reid J. Ribble
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Ami Bera
Member of Congress

J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress