The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House of Representatives  
H232, U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House of Representatives  
H107, U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer,

As our Congress enters a transitional period and Democrats re-gain the Majority, we must make our top priorities known to our body of government and to the American people. While Congress passed several bills to increase access to treatment and recovery, improve state prescription drug monitoring programs, increase access to medication assisted treatment, support research efforts, and expand availability of naloxone, many of our states are seeing an increase in overdose death rates.

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the final 2017 data from the National Vital Statistics System regarding mortality that tells a dire story of the tragic human toll of this crisis. Between 2016 and 2017, the age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths increased by 9.6%. In 2017, there were 70,237 drug overdose deaths. Of that number, 47,600 were opioid overdose deaths. Also, drug overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl increased by 46% between 2016 and 2017.

While this paints a bleak picture of the nation, several states experienced the brunt of the epidemic. According to the CDC, the following states experienced increases in overdose deaths between 2016 and 2017:

- Ohio increased from 39.1 deaths per 100,000 to 46.3 deaths per 100,000
- Pennsylvania increased from 37.9 deaths per 100,000 to 44.3 deaths per 100,000
- Kentucky increased from 33.5 deaths per 100,000 to 37.1 deaths per 100,000
- West Virginia increased from 52 deaths per 100,000 to 57.8 deaths per 100,000
- Maine increased from 28.7 deaths per 100,000 to 34.4 deaths per 100,000
- Indiana increased from 24 deaths per 100,000 to 29.4 deaths per 100,000
- Delaware increased from 30.8 deaths per 100,000 to 37 deaths per 100,000

New Hampshire was the only state that experienced a decrease from 39 deaths per 100,000 in 2016 to 37 deaths per 100,000 in 2017, dropping the state out of the top five from 2016.

In 2017, overdose death rates in 24 states surpassed the national average of 21.7 per 100,000. Those states and territories, excluding the 7 listed above, include Arizona, Connecticut, Washington, DC, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, and Vermont.

At a time when our state and local partners are begging for federal assistance to combat the opioid crisis in their communities, Congress must answer the call through increased resources, creative solutions, and with

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more legislative staff. Dedicated staff across House committees capable of analyzing both the larger federal need and specifics from states and districts is necessary at this point.

People across this country are suffering and need more relief than our local governments can provide. As members from the states impacted by this crisis the most, we see people every day who need our help. We hope that you will take into consideration our proposal to make countering the opioid crisis a top priority for the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

David Cicilline  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

Brendan Boyle  
Member of Congress
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress
Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Avalanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
Member of Congress

Ben McAdams
Member of Congress