

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2018

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, & Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, & Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you work toward a Final Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget agreement, we write to urge inclusion of robust funding for critical opioid-related research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The latest Center for Disease Control (CDC) overdose mortality rates found that 115 people per day lost their lives to opioids in 2016—a 27 percent increase from the year prior. Supporting additional research and development is critical to combatting this evolving and multi-faceted threat to our communities. That is why we urge you to support the NIH Opioid Initiative, a public-private partnership to advance opioid research, by providing \$5 billion over the next five years for its important work.

Nearly half of all opioid-related deaths in 2016 involved powerful synthetic opioids like fentanyl. This means that, in just one year, deaths from synthetic opioids more than doubled. These illicit street drugs are extremely powerful and hard to counter—compared to morphine, fentanyl is 100 times stronger while carfentanil is 10,000 times stronger. Overdose antidotes used today are proving less effective in combatting powerful synthetics and first responders report needing several doses to revive some patients. We must invest in the next generation of overdose antidotes that are more effective at countering these powerful street drugs.

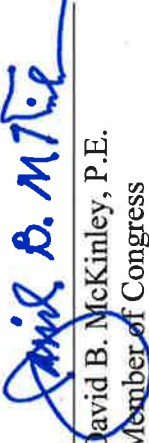
There is also a critical need to invest in research related to our understanding and treatment of pain. Today, 25 million people suffer from chronic pain. With few treatment options, medical professionals often prescribe opioids to manage pain relief. Opioids, which include such medications as morphine, codeine, and oxycodone, are classified as narcotics. They have addictive potential and can be dangerous when abused. Over 2.5 million Americans have an opioid use disorder. The national epidemic of opioid dependency and addiction underscores the need for alternative treatments for pain relief.

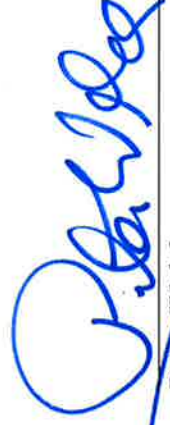
For years, we have seen this epidemic ravage and devastate our communities. Through its Opioid Initiative, the NIH is teaming up with public and private partners to make important strides in the fight against opioid misuse. Funding this initiative at the requested amount will allow for the development of more effective overdose antidotes while also expanding research on opioid misuse, the understanding of pain, and the discovery of non-addictive, non-opioid alternatives to treat pain.

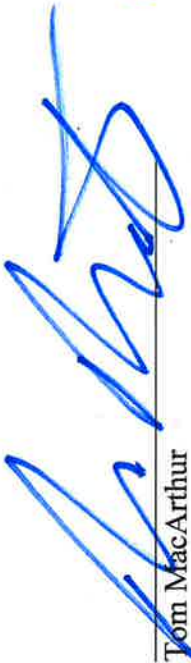
We respectfully request the inclusion of \$5 billion over the next five years for the new NIH initiative. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,


Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress


David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress


Peter Welch
Member of Congress


Tom MacArthur
Member of Congress


Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress


Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress


Ro Khanna
Member of Congress


Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress


Steve Chabot
Member of Congress



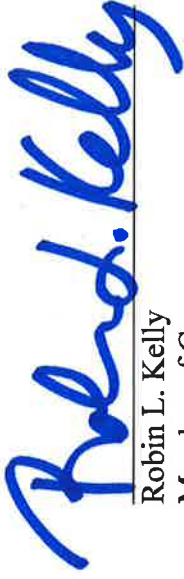
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



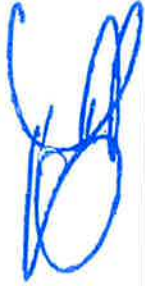
Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



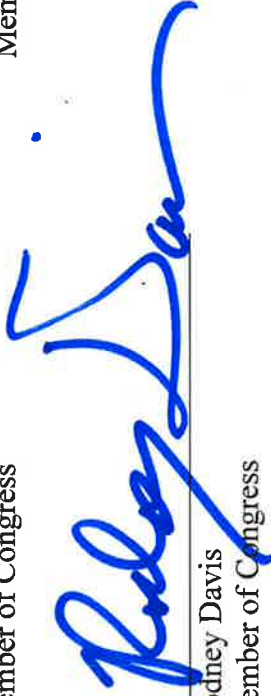
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress