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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

March 26, 2018

Vice Admiral Jerome Adams
Surgeon General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Vice Admiral Adams:

Drug overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, surging by over 17% percent in the past year. The estimated amount of deaths is 64,000, with many of these deaths fueled by opioids. By comparison, this far surpasses the 37,000 Americans killed in automobile accidents. Unfortunately, preliminary data is showing that the problem is worsening, not getting better.

In the past, the Surgeon General has used their influential position to warn Americans of substances and diseases that were highly dangerous to the public's health. Most famously, C. Everett Koop became a household name by crusading against the dangers and highly addictive nature of cigarettes and other tobacco products. As a result of his advocacy, the amount of smokers in America has steadily declined, reaching a low of 15.5% in 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from a high of over 40% in the 1960's.

While this drop is certainly not all attributable to past efforts by the Surgeon General, it speaks to the influence that they can have in educating the public. In the past, your predecessors have issued "Calls to Action" to engage Americans on various major public health crises. I urge you to issue a "Call to Action" on the dangers of opioid addiction to help better educate the country on this issue.

In the past, we have invited your predecessors to visit West Virginia, but unfortunately these calls went unanswered. West Virginia is the epicenter of this crisis, and I would like to extend an open invitation for you to visit. Our state has the highest instance of overdose deaths in the nation (52 per 100,000). West Virginians are losing family members, friends and neighbors on a daily basis because of this terrible crisis. Our citizens could use your assistance and help as a partner in combatting this epidemic.

Sincerely,



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