

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2020

The Honorable Elinore McCance-Katz
Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Assistant Secretary McCance-Katz,

We would like to express our gratitude for your hard work, and hope for your future help, to continue combating the opioid crisis. No communities are immune to this growing public health crisis that continues to devastate families and communities across the United States.

Our home states are taking an all-hands-on-deck approach to eradicate this epidemic. Our dedicated elected leaders, public health experts, health care providers, pharmacists, addiction counselors, educators, and community advocates are tireless in their efforts to provide the necessary resources to get people back on their feet. Many of their efforts are being fueled by grant funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), made possible by the passage of the *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act* in October 2018.

This comprehensive law provides funding for providers to more easily offer Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for substance use disorders, gives states more flexibility to cover long-term mental health care services, and significantly expands telemedicine services to treat addiction. These services are especially critical for rural communities.

However, to effectively work together to develop long-term, sustainable solutions to reduce substance use disorders (SUD) in their communities, we encourage SAMHSA to continue to offer greater flexibilities in SUD grants. This is especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic, while the economic downturn, rising unemployment, and other challenges associated with a second public health crisis can contribute to higher incidence rates of individuals grappling with SUD and mental health disorders. We are hoping that, with your partnership, the federal government can offer additional assistance to these communities. Please kindly respond to the following questions at your earliest convenience:

1. Are you continuing to work with local communities to provide as much flexibility as possible to help these leaders treat addiction? If so, how?
2. If not, how can Congress enhance the work of these local leaders and health experts for them to develop more customized solutions that fit the needs of their communities?
3. Is more Congressional action needed to achieve this objective?

4. What direct actions are HHS and SAMHSA taking to prevent a second opioid crisis that could follow the COVID-19 pandemic? Would additional flexibilities in federal grant programs help to prevent a second crisis?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We know our constituents deeply appreciate your commitment to keeping Americans safe, healthy, and for your efforts to repair the emotional scars endured by communities as a result of the opioid crisis. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



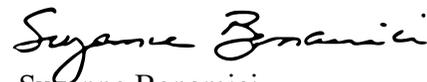
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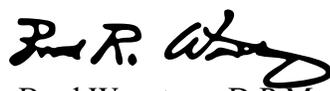


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