

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 20, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Alexander, and Ranking Member Murray:

As the lead sponsors of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) and the CARA 2.0 Act (S. 2456), we write in advance of your efforts to reconcile the two chambers' opioids response legislation to urge you to retain the provisions from our bipartisan CARA 2.0 Act and consider incorporating additional proposals from the legislation.

We are pleased about the inclusion of a funding authorization for infant plans of safe care, the requirement to create recovery housing standards, and the establishment of a youth recovery initiative. Additionally, we support the increased authorizations for treatment for pregnant and postpartum women and CARA's First Responder Training program. We urge you to retain these important provisions in any final opioids response package.

We also encourage you to consider additional reforms to bolster the federal response to this crisis. The CARA 2.0 Act includes reasonable limitations on prescribing opioids for acute pain and sensible requirements for using prescription drug monitoring programs. And while the Senate opioids package includes a modest increase for CARA's Building Communities of Recovery program, we urge you to consider additional funding and reforms to support the critical work of recovery community organizations. These groups, which are supporting those walking the long, difficult, noble path of recovery, will be an important part of any long-term response to the opioid crisis. In particular, a full accounting of the federal funding that has been spent on recovery supports could inform future investments in this work.

Additionally, we urge you to include a policy that lifts the Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion to allow Medicaid to cover all necessary inpatient stays for individuals struggling with addiction in the final bill.

Every day, an average of 115 Americans die from an opioid overdose. We must take this opportunity to advance a comprehensive approach to preventing and treating addiction while also supporting those in long-term recovery. The policies laid out in the CARA 2.0 Act should be an integral part of that approach. Thank you for your attention to these priorities, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to fight the opioid crisis.

Sincerely,



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator