

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

Thank you for your leadership in addressing our nation's substance use epidemics. As you consider fiscal year 2020 spending priorities within the bill funding the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, we are writing to request \$2,358,079,000 for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant, which is the cornerstone of States' substance use treatment, prevention, and recovery systems. This funding level is equal to what the House of Representatives approved in the FY2019 Labor-HHS Appropriations legislation and a \$500 million increase over current funding levels.

Any sustainable strategy designed to address the substance use crisis in America must include a strong commitment to the SAPT Block Grant, particularly in the midst of the ongoing opioid epidemic. In 2017, 11.1 million Americans aged 12 and older misused opioid pain relievers, and roughly 890,000 individuals used heroin. Individuals who misuse prescription opioid painkillers are forty times more likely to be addicted to heroin, and prior prescription drug use appears to have been a common initial step on the pathway to heroin addiction, with 80 percent of new heroin users previously misusing prescription opioids. Heroin can also be laced with even more potent substances, such as fentanyl, further increasing overdose risk. In 2017, more than 70,000 Americans died of a drug overdose, and total of 47,600 of those deaths were caused by an opioid.

In addition to opioids, substance use remains a persistent public health crisis in our communities. After years of making steady gains, tobacco use among young people is again on the rise with one in five high school students reporting e-cigarette use within the past 30 days. Alcohol misuse continues to contribute to over 88,000 alcohol-related deaths each year, making it the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It is clear more must be done to support effective treatment and prevention programs.

The SAPT Block Grant, distributed by formula to all States and Territories, funds services that result in exceptional outcomes. In FY 2018, SAPT funding directly served 1.5 million Americans. Of clients discharged from SAPT Block Grant-funded treatment programs, 57 percent were abstinent from illicit drugs, 76 percent were abstinent from alcohol, 93 percent had no criminal justice involvement, and 89 percent had permanent housing.

A strong commitment to the SAPT Block Grant represents a strong commitment to primary prevention. In addition to treatment services, the SAPT Block Grant includes prevention funds that

represent 70 percent of primary prevention funding managed by State substance abuse agencies. In some States, the SAPT investment accounts for 100 percent of substance abuse prevention dollars. Unfortunately, SAPT Block Grant funding has not kept up with inflation, resulting in a 24 percent—or \$444 million—decrease in actual funding since 2009.

We urge you to provide \$2,358,079,000 for the SAPT Block Grant as work progresses on FY 2020 appropriations. Sensible investments in the SAPT Block Grant will ultimately save money while strengthening communities, keeping families together, and most importantly saving lives.

Sincerely,



Rep. Paul Tonko



Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick



Rep. Donald M. Payne, Jr.



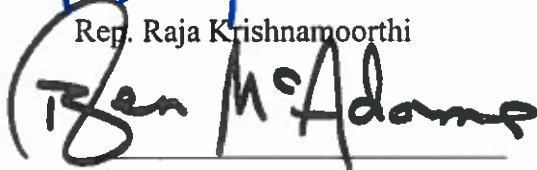
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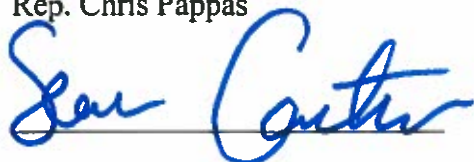
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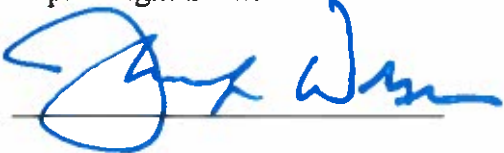
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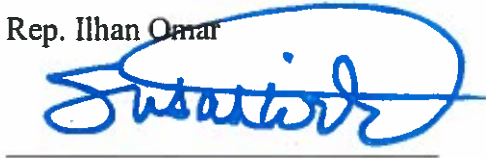
Rep. Anthony G. Brown



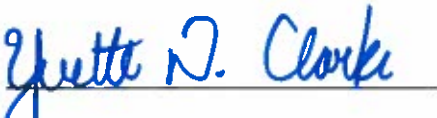
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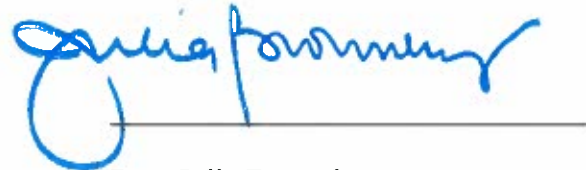

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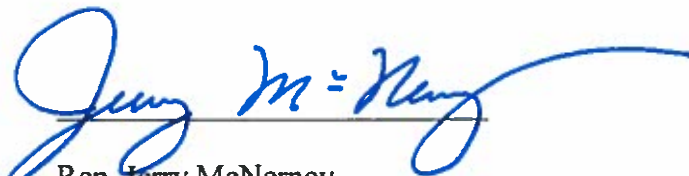

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