

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 3, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Ranking Member Mikulski:

Now that a bipartisan budget agreement has been reached and the Appropriations Committee will begin negotiations on a comprehensive Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations bill, I write to request that you direct additional budgetary resources to the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services to combat the growing heroin crisis in our nation.

I appreciate the difficult choices you must make among future spending priorities. However, heroin, fentanyl, and associated drugs have created one of the worst drug-related public health crises in our nation's history. Drug-related deaths have surged ahead of automobile crashes as the number one cause of accidental death in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that nearly 44,000 people died of drugs overdoses in 2013. Heroin deaths have quadrupled from 2002 to 2013, including a 39 percent increase from 2012 to 2013 alone. And the CDC estimates that 44 Americans die from an overdose every single day.

My home state of New Hampshire has been hit particularly hard by this epidemic. In 2014, 325 people were lost to opioid overdoses; an increase of 76 percent from the previous year. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services reports that, in the last decade, the number of people admitted to state treatment programs increased 90 percent for heroin use and 500 percent for prescription drug use. Despite our best efforts, we are not coming close to meeting the demand for treatment services. It is estimated that 100,000 people are currently seeking treatment in New Hampshire. At current funding levels, we are only able to serve about four percent of that population.

As our states deal with the heartbreaking consequences of addiction and overdoses, we are also seeing a sharp decline in federal support for critical law enforcement and public health programs. Programs like the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program has had its funding reduced from \$510 million in FY 2010 to \$387 million in FY 2015. The Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program, which helps every state plan, implement and evaluate activities that prevent and treat substance abuse, was cut \$50 million in FY2015.

These are just two of many existing federal programs where additional resources could make a real difference. Other programs include the COPS Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) program, the Safe Schools and Healthy Student programs, the Strategic Prevention Framework Partnership

for Success, the Capacity Expansion for Assisted Treatment for Drug Addiction, and the Recovery Community Services program.

I appreciate that, thanks to your leadership, the Senate Committee on Appropriations has worked tirelessly to channel as many resources as possible to address heroin interdiction and treatment. However, given the seriousness of this accelerating crisis, it is imperative that we seize the opportunity provided by the bipartisan budget agreement and make critical investments in the interdiction and drug treatment programs that will allow communities to take immediate action.

The heroin crisis is a national emergency. It is destroying families and ravaging communities all across the United States. Every day we are losing young men and women whose lives could have been saved. To mount an effective response to this crisis, we need to devote additional resources in the FY2016 omnibus to dramatically increase our nation's interdiction and treatment capabilities.

Thank you for your continued leadership, and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeanne Shaheen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator