

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 21, 2019

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

I write to urge you to immediately administer the unused funds from previous fiscal years available for the Drug Free Communities (DFC) Support Program. As you know, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) is responsible for administering the DFC program in coordination with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Community-based coalitions in New Hampshire and throughout the country rely on DFC grants to prevent and reduce substance use among our youth. This critical program is an important piece of federal efforts to ensure that the next generation of youth don't face another drug epidemic.

I understand that SAMSHA has agreed to administer 42 additional grants for a total of 192 new grants with \$100 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 funds provided by Congress. I appreciate that SAMSHA is moving forward with administering the entirety of FY 2019 funding; however, it is critical that SAMSHA administer any remaining funds from previous fiscal years to meet FY 2019 demand. I understand that ONDCP is capable of awarding an additional 20 grants for a total of 212 new awards with funds SAMSHA is currently holding from previous fiscal years. These 20 additional grants would be awarded to qualified applicants who need these funds to reach the youth in their communities with prevention and education services.

Communities in New Hampshire and across the nation have been devastated by the opioid epidemic in recent years. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 70,237 drug overdose deaths occurred in the U.S. in 2017, including 47,000 deaths involving opioids.¹ Overdose deaths from opioids have increased almost six fold since 1999. We must make every effort now to address this epidemic with the funding that has been made available by Congress.

I thank you for your attention to this matter, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Overview of the Drug Overdose Epidemic: Behind the Numbers*, (Dec. 19, 2018) <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/index.html>.