



Senator Ed Markey
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Richard Neal
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2014

Dear Senator Markey and Congressman Neal:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to improving the health of all Americans, I am pleased to endorse the Opioid Overdose Reduction Act (S. 2092/H.R. 4288). We thank you for introducing this legislation which will help expand access to lifesaving rescue drugs.

Prescription drug abuse is a growing public health crisis. Approximately 6.1 million Americans abuse or misuse prescription drugs, and more than 60 Americans die every day from a prescription drug overdose. Overdose deaths involving prescription painkillers have quadrupled since 1999 and now outnumber deaths from all illicit drugs, including heroin and cocaine, combined.

While we work to turn the tide of this epidemic, we must also do all that we can to save the lives of those suffering from addiction. Overdose deaths are preventable, but there is a limited window of time where rescue drugs can reverse the effects of an overdose. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist and can be used to counter the effects of prescription painkiller overdose. This rescue drug has no abuse potential and can be administered by minimally trained laypeople but must be administered quickly to save a life. According to the Centers for Disease Control, at least 188 community-based overdose prevention programs now distribute naloxone, have provided training and naloxone to more than 50,000 people, and have led to more than 10,000 overdose reversals.

The Opioid Overdose Reduction Act would help ensure that fears of civil liability do not prevent medical or non-medical personnel from administering Naloxone and potentially saving a life. It will also ensure that medical personnel who prescribe rescue drugs to persons other than a patient (such as a parent, spouse or caregiver) will be exempt from civil liability, so long as the person receives training in the administration of the drug. While many states are moving in this direction and enacting their own civil liability protections, this legislation would ensure that there is a basic level of protection guaranteed across the country.



Reversing the prescription drug abuse epidemic will require a range of strategies and policies, including public education about the dangers of prescription drugs; education for health care providers on how some medications may be misused and how to recognize the signs to addiction; a strong network of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs to help track the prescribing and dispensing of controlled prescription drugs; and expanded access to substance abuse treatment for those suffering from addiction. Expanding access to rescue drugs is a critical piece of this effort and we thank you again for introducing the Opioid Overdose Reduction Act to remove a barrier to this lifesaving medication. We look forward to working with you to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some overlapping letters.

Jeffrey Levi, Ph.D.
Executive Director