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The Honorable Patrick Toomey
United States Senate
248 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Toomey:

On March 21, I wrote you to express how important funding for substance use disorder treatment is in our fight against the heroin and opioid epidemic ravaging Pennsylvania. I appreciate your responses and steps you have taken to provide resources to fight this epidemic, including the 21st Century Cures Act and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. Today, I am writing to express my concern that the Senate Better Care Reconciliation Act will reverse progress for millions of people who are dealing with the challenge of opioid addiction, including 175,000 Pennsylvanians.

As you well know, the heroin and opioid crisis is the most serious public health and public safety threat facing our Commonwealth. Last year, 4,642 Pennsylvanians lost their lives to overdoses, a 37 percent increase from 2015. The risk of death from overdosing is on the rise with the increased prevalence of fentanyl and other additives. We know the abuse of prescription drugs leads to the addiction that drives many Pennsylvanians to these deadly substances. In fact, 75 percent of new heroin users start with abusing prescription opioids. This is a statewide problem affecting every type of community in our Commonwealth that requires a multi-pronged, multi-disciplinary response.

As Pennsylvania's chief law enforcement officer, addressing this crisis is my top priority. Our agents work tirelessly to investigate and arrest the drug dealers and traffickers who peddle this poison in our communities. We've also taken an aggressive approach to stopping the diversion of lawful prescription drugs for illicit use, by both investigating bad actors in the medical profession and promoting disposal of unused medications.

No level of law enforcement can solve this problem completely. Expanding access to treatment is critical. The health care bill under consideration by the United States Senate will prevent us from effectively combatting the heroin crisis because it eliminates guaranteed access to treatment for millions of Americans.

The Affordable Care Act has helped 1.1 million more Pennsylvanians gain health coverage and 175,000 to access substance use disorder treatment. The Senate bill would roll back much of this expansion, and end these patients' guarantee of coverage for treatment through exchange plans or Medicaid. A recent study estimated the cost of opioid treatment in Pennsylvania will rise to \$1.6 billion by 2026. These facts are part of the reason why, when a similar version of this bill was before the House, the Pennsylvania delegation was divided, with half of our Congressmen—four Republicans and five Democrats—voting against that version of the legislation.

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You have been a leader on this issue and we share a joint commitment to stemming this crisis by reducing the diversion of prescription pain killers, limiting the inappropriate use of prescription opioids and helping those battling addiction receive the treatment they need. I appreciate the difficult role you have in balancing the reality of this crisis with other policy priorities and constraints of the federal budget and our complex healthcare system. As you negotiate with your colleagues in the Senate, I urge you to keep the issue of access to essential drug treatment top of mind and do everything in your power to ensure Pennsylvanians can get the help they need to overcome addiction.

Confronting the heroin and opioid epidemic is my top priority as Pennsylvania Attorney General, and I look forward to working with you and your colleagues to fight this crisis.

All the best,



JOSH SHAPIRO
Pennsylvania Attorney General