

EDWARD J. MARKEY
MASSACHUSETTS

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U.S. SENATE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

United States Senate

SUITE SD-255
DIRKSEN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET
BOSTON, MA 02203
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312
FALL RIVER, MA 02721
508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
413-785-4610

August 3, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I urge you to follow the recommendation provided by your Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis (the Commission) to declare the opioid overdose epidemic a public health emergency, under the *Public Health Services Act*, and to provide the prevention, treatment, and recovery resources needed to help end our nation's unprecedented opioid crisis. The continued plague of overdose deaths across this nation demands a swift and robust response that compliments and coordinates existing public health efforts by federal and state governments. A public health emergency declaration would be a monumental step toward acknowledging the graveness of this issue and the importance of taking an all hands approach to addressing this crisis.

According to the Network for Public Health Law, six governors have declared a state of emergency or made a similar declaration in their states in response to the opioid crisis since 2014. This action has elevated the issue of opioid addiction within the state, allowed governors to allocate additional funds toward a response, and better coordinate a multitude of efforts across the state government toward a common goal. Similarly, a national emergency would emphasize the urgency of this issue, help focus efforts across the federal government, and provide an opportunity for you to work with Congress to allocate new resources towards a federal response. It is imperative that, as recommended by the Commission, your response to this epidemic follow a public health strategy that compliments and coordinates existing efforts and dedicates new resources, rather than tapping into existing funds needed and used to support state and local efforts.

Within the last year, Congress has passed two bipartisan laws to address the opioid crisis, the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act* and the *21st Century Cures Act*. Together, these laws provided new authority and desperately needed resources aimed at increasing access to treatment and recovery programs and reducing overdose deaths. However, more work is necessary if we are to solve the scourge of opioid addiction that claims 91 lives each day.

Recognizing there is no silver bullet to eliminate this crisis, we must engage in coordinated, comprehensive efforts using an all hands approach that: addresses this crisis from a public health perspective, does not rely solely on law enforcement and incarceration, and commits to providing new and robust resources toward the opioid crisis. This is essential to helping the individuals and families struggling with opioid use disorders.

In the event you decide to forgo designating the opioid crisis as a public health emergency, there is a lot this administration can and should be doing to address this epidemic immediately. The recommendations provided by the Commission, many of which my colleagues in the Senate and I have already introduced as legislation, are a good place to start. I stand ready to work with you to further these initiatives.

You have a duty to the American public to turn this White House commission into a White House commitment – a commitment to action, to funding, and to solutions. The country can afford no more delays.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "E" and "M".

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator