

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2014

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

Our nation is under siege from an opioid overdose epidemic, fueled by a dramatic increase in the use of illicit prescription opioids and, more recently, heroin. We need to look no further than our home state of Ohio, where we find ourselves on the front lines of this important fight. Drug overdoses are at an all-time high, averaging four deaths a day in Ohio alone. Equally as alarming, overdoses have surpassed traffic accidents as the leading cause of accidental deaths in our state.

To confront this crisis, we are writing to urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) to undertake the use of addiction medications in jails, federal prisons and reentry centers – similar to what is being implemented in Ohio. To truly break the cycle of drugs and crime, our collective response at the local, state and federal levels must involve effective prevention and reentry rehabilitation strategies using effective tools like addiction treatment medications, in combination with counseling and related services.

Our state, along with others, is employing creative solutions to meet this crisis head on. Specifically, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is implementing a five-county drug court pilot program, which was created in Ohio's SFY14-15 state budget. The pilot requires collaboration among drug courts, treatment providers, and prescribers to promote abstinence from opiates and decrease recidivism for participants. The use of these medications in this pilot, in combination with counseling and other services, provides a comprehensive approach that fosters public safety and health while supporting successful reintegration into the community and workforce.

The Department of Justice should mirror the work being done in Ohio, and authorize a multi-state program utilizing abstinence based addiction medications to support successful re-entry of opioid and alcohol addicted offenders in our jails (Bureau of Justice Assistance), federal prisons and reentry centers (Bureau of Prisons), as well as those on supervised parole/release (Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts). Such an evidence-based approach could be an effective tool for confronting and reducing the opioid epidemic in our communities and helping to prevent future crimes and costly re-incarceration, which is rapidly consuming the DOJ's budget.

Our delegation requests an in-person meeting to discuss how we can work together to truly break the cycle of drugs and crime in Ohio and throughout America. We commend the DOJ for taking meaningful steps to address our nation's massively overcrowded prisons. Undoubtedly, the

relationship between this burgeoning epidemic and the growing prison population is inextricably linked. Therefore, our response to this crisis must include treatment of the underlying drug addiction that leads to recidivism, not to simply and routinely incarcerate the same individuals for the same crimes.

Sincerely,



Steve Stivers
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Steve Chabot
Member of Congress



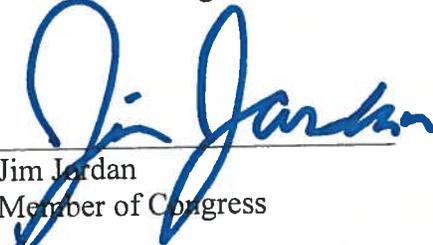
Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress



Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



Jim Jordan
Member of Congress



David P. Joyce
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Bob Latta
Member of Congress



Jim Renacci
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



Patrick Tiberi
Member of Congress



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable John Conyers, Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Karol Mason, Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs
Charles E. Samuels, Jr., Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons
The Honorable John D. Bates, Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts