

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 18, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to ask the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take immediate action to increase access and reduce the price of naloxone auto-injectors and nasal sprays; life-saving opioid overdose reversal products. We believe that every individual, municipality, and entity that wants to equip themselves with these products should be able to afford to.

The opioid epidemic claimed the lives of 42,249 Americans in 2016 – about 115 Americans every day. Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death for Americans under 50, exceeding the peak car crash and H.I.V. deaths. Unfortunately, despite the progress health care providers, first responders, state governments, and others have made in fighting the epidemic, data from the CDC suggests that the problem is still getting worse, as there were more than 45,000 deaths from August 2017 to August 2018.^[1]

As you know, United States Surgeon General Dr. Jerome M. Adams issued a national advisory urging more Americans to keep on hand and learn how to use naloxone delivery devices. He states that, “increasing the availability and targeted distribution of naloxone is a critical component of our efforts to reduce opioid-related overdose deaths and, when combined with the availability of effective treatment, to ending the opioid epidemic.” We strongly agree.

Unfortunately, despite being approved by the FDA more than 45 years ago, the price of naloxone has increased dramatically during the epidemic. The prices of the two user-friendly devices that can be administered outside of a health care setting are the highest. Narcan, which delivers naloxone as a nasal spray, costs \$150 for a two pack and Evzio, a hand-held auto-injector, increased in price from \$690 in 2014 to more than \$4,000 today for a two pack.

Such high prices are already leaving local fire, police, and health departments struggling to afford naloxone, and many Americans will want to follow the Surgeon General’s advisory only to realize they are unable to afford the drug that could save their own life or the life of someone they know. The Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis recommended empowering the HHS Secretary to negotiate reduced pricing, and in October 2017 19 Senators wrote in support of this policy. To date, no such action has been taken by HHS. We urge HHS to immediately negotiate a lower price for easy to administer naloxone combination products. In addition, we ask you to ensure affordable coverage for individuals with health insurance, including Medicare, Medicaid, and individual and employer sponsored plans.

^[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

No police officer, no firefighter, no public health provider, and no person should be unable to save a life because of the high price. By bringing down the cost, we can get this life-saving drug in the hands of more people as called for by the Surgeon General. Doing so will save countless lives.

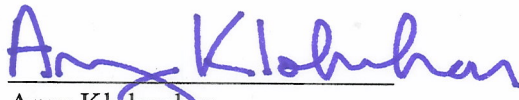
Sincerely,



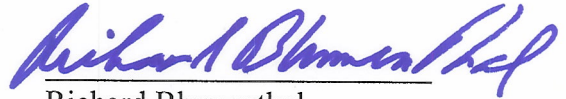
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



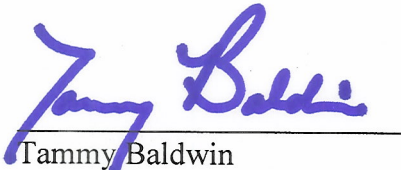
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



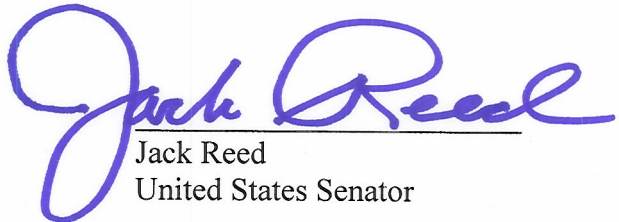
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



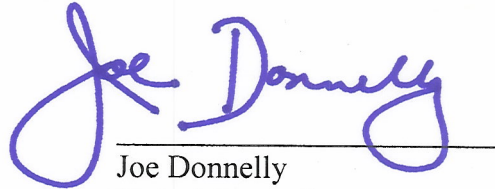
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



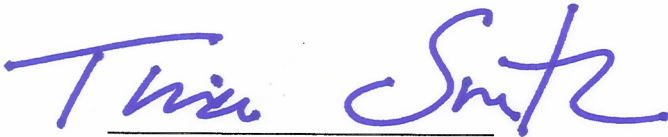
Jack Reed
United States Senator



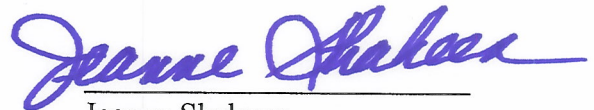
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



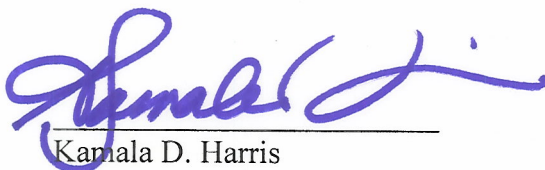
Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



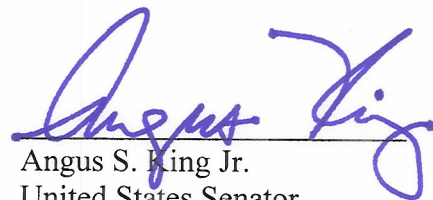
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



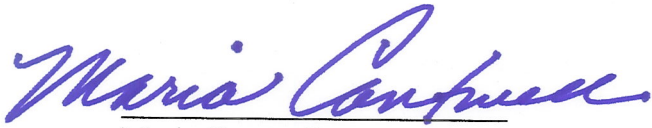
Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



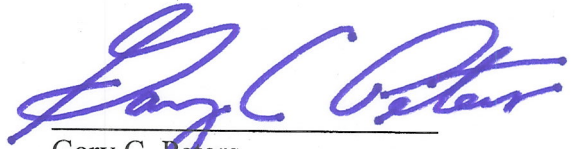
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator