

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 8, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Sessions
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

The opioid crisis knows no boundaries; it reaches into homes in every community in every region of this country. Stopping the flow of these drugs is critical to ending the crisis, but to do so requires the ability to trace the drugs to their source. This demands a forceful and vigorous effort by our forensic science community.

As you know, the opioid crisis is truly an epidemic, and the surge in deaths since 2013 has been due primarily to the synthetic opioid fentanyl and its derivatives. To date, the federal government's response has been focused on prevention, interdiction and treatment, but has not sufficiently addressed the forensic science aspects of the crisis. The forensic science community's work provides law enforcement and other government entities with the information they need to identify new opioid derivatives, analyze evidence, find the importers, manufacturers, and distributors, and determine causes of death in overdose cases.

The current opioid crisis has overwhelmed the nation's collective laboratory systems with more than a 6000% increase in the last four years, according to National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) data provided by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors. Case backlogs and turnaround times are growing. Dangerous emerging drugs are not being scheduled to make them illegal, and deaths likely associated with drug overdose are not being investigated completely by medical examiners and coroners. Toxicologists are not able to provide timely results on driving under the influence of drug cases and post-mortem toxicology cases. Medical examiner accreditations are being lost because of the increased workload.

However, the opioid crisis is not the only issue affecting state, county, local and tribal crime laboratories and medical examiner/coroner officers. Other needs include more and newer instrumentation, increased personnel, additional training opportunities, and applied research. Input by state, county, local and tribal forensic science service providers is important to how the Department should expend its scarce resources. It is important to have a consistent and clear line of communication between the Department and state, county, local and tribal forensic science service providers.

In light of these ongoing serious challenges, we request that you provide to Congress within 30 days a comprehensive list of the ways in which the Department is engaging with and supporting state, county, local and tribal forensic science service providers with regard to the nation's opioid epidemic, and the specific mechanisms by which that is being accomplished to include grant programs and technical assistance by DOJ component agencies. We also look forward to a

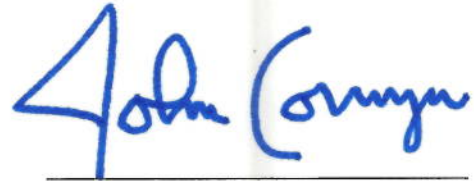
broader review of how you will address the needs of state, local and tribal forensic service providers in the needs assessment required by the Justice for All Act (Public Law No: 114-324).

Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



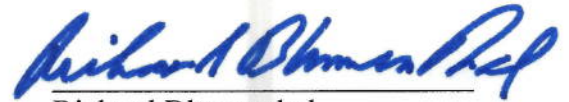
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



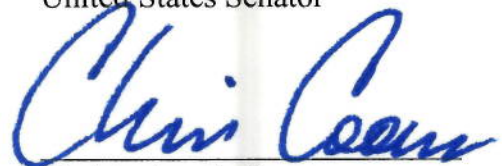
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Thad Cochran
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator




Mike Crapo
United States Senator




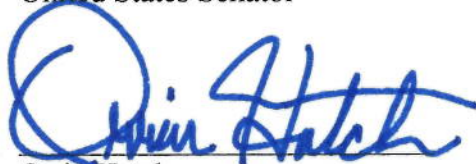
Ted Cruz
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

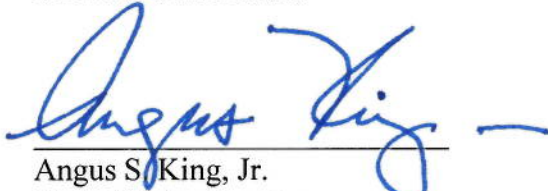

Al Franken
United States Senator

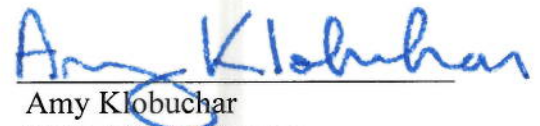

Charles Grassley
United States Senator


Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

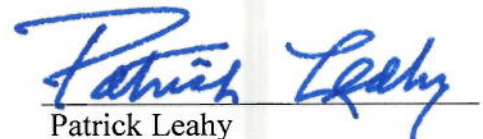

Orrin Hatch
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

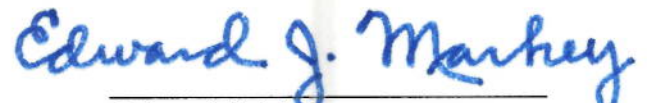

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator

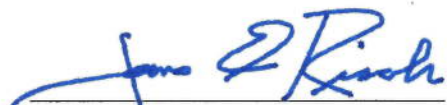

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator


Joe Manchin III
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

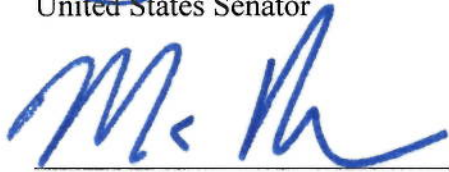

Rob Portman
United States Senator



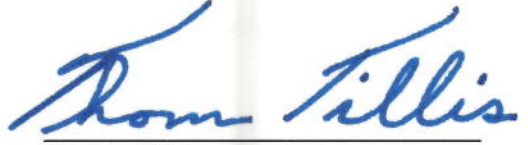
James E. Risch
United States Senator



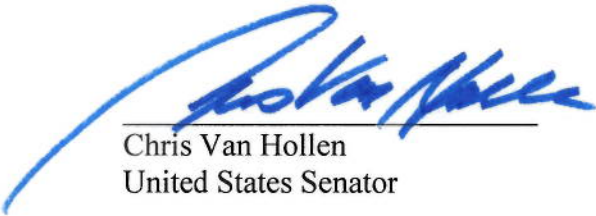
M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator