



Jay C. Butler, MD  
Association of State and  
Territorial Health Officials  
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Dr. Butler:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Alex Azar and Surgeon General Jerome Adams. They have asked me to respond to you directly. The Trump Administration is strongly committed to addressing the nation's opioid epidemic. As the President remarked in his State of the Union address, 64,000 Americans – 174 Americans per day – died as a result of drug overdoses in FY 2016. Opioids were the main driver of these deaths, as opioids were involved in 42,249 deaths in 2016.

In response to this crisis, the FY 2019 Budget proposes a \$10 billion historic investment to combat the opioid epidemic and address serious mental illness. By funding the proposal in the Office of the Secretary, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will be able to further facilitate support and collaboration across the Department's operating and staff divisions on this important initiative. This structure will also better enable the Department to support the implementation of evidence-based strategies within states and communities and target these efforts in the areas of greatest need.

This new investment will expand efforts to prevent opioid abuse, increase access to overdose-reversing drugs, and help Americans seeking treatment to access treatment and recovery support services, building upon the Department's five point strategy, which involves:

- Improving access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services, including the full range of medication-assisted treatment;
- Targeting availability and distribution of overdose-reversing drugs;
- Strengthening our understanding of the crisis through better public health data and reporting;
- Providing support for cutting edge research on pain and addiction; and
- Advancing better practices for pain management.

For additional information on our commitment and actions to address this crisis, please see our 2017 HHS Accomplishments Document. Efforts included to expanding access to addiction treatment through state waivers, reducing opioid prescribing, and providing funding to states and communities.

Thank you for ASTHO's continued partnership on working to turn the tide of the opioid epidemic. I look forward to working with you and your staff on addressing this critical public health issue. If you or your staff have additional questions, please contact me at 202-690-6060.

Sincerely

Jack Kalavritinos  
Acting Director

Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs