



January 24, 2018

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

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The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President Trump, Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Pelosi and Schumer:

On behalf of Research!America, the nation's largest nonprofit alliance committed to advancing medical progress and strengthening our nation's public health system, I am writing to express our support for heightened efforts to address the opioid crisis.

Over the past several years, the federal government has stepped up its efforts to combat the opioid crisis. From enacting the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, to establishing the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, to formally declaring the opioid crisis a Public Health Emergency, the Executive Branch and Congress have recognized that this epidemic must be stopped.

We fully support your efforts, but request that you consider whether additional resources need to be deployed to accelerate progress and save lives. Opioid overdose rates have quadrupled since 1999, and 116 Americans lose their lives every day to this scourge. We must intensify our efforts, not only to stop the immediate threat, but to address its

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underlying causes. If we do not commit to both objectives, the opioid crisis may well elude our best efforts to contain and ultimately, end it.

In that context, a stronger investment in biomedical, behavioral, epidemiologic and other research is critical. We need to better understand and develop evidence-based interventions that respond to what research has already revealed about addiction and overdose. Research has revealed, for example, significant interactions between mental illness and substance abuse disorders such as opioid addiction. More research is needed to harness this information, translating it into effective preventative and treatment strategies.

Another knowledge gap emblematic of the need for greater research relates to a major public health issue in its own right: pain, both chronic and acute. Research gaps in this area range from epidemiologic to behavioral to biomedical. Among these gaps, while more than 10% of the population reports chronic pain, meaning they have experienced daily pain for at least three months, there is a lack of solid data on the incidence and diagnosis rate of chronic pain, and there is an urgent need for behavioral and non-addictive medical interventions that prevent and address pain.

Recent studies have also identified important gaps in the evidence needed to guide treatment of acute post-operative pain. Since opioids are commonly used for treatment, research to address these gaps could have important implications for efforts to reduce opioid dependence and overdose. The *STOP Pain Act*, which was signed into law as part of the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA)*, and the pending *Opioid and STOP Pain Initiative Act*, which would provide emergency funding to advance the *STOP Pain Act* and address other unmet pain research needs, hold promise for bridging gaps in our understanding of pain and identifying safe and effective strategies for addressing it.

We urge you to intensify the nation's response to the opioid epidemic, in part by bolstering the research needed to support effective solutions. Leveraging research, our nation can put every dollar we deploy against the opioid crisis to its best use and put a permanent end to this epidemic. Thank you for considering our views, and we hope you will call on our alliance if we can assist in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Woolley".

Mary Woolley

President and CEO, Research!America