Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan:

As leaders from states and districts hit hard by the opioid and heroin public health crisis that has killed tens of thousands of Americans over the past few years, we applaud your announcement that the House will consider legislation on this topic over the next few weeks. The urgency of this matter is clear. According to a study released earlier this year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more people died of drug overdoses in 2014 than any year before, putting the drug overdose mortality number to over 47,055. Citing the same study, sixty one percent of those deaths – 28,647 people – died in opioid-related overdoses.

Last month, the Senate passed the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016* (S.524/HR 953), by an overwhelmingly bipartisan margin. Now, this legislation awaits consideration by the House. Among other things, CARA expands education and prevention, increases access to the life-saving drug naloxone through law enforcement and first responders, adds disposal sites, improves access to treatment and intervention, and strengthens prescription drug monitoring programs. House-drafted provisions similar to the Senate-passed CARA provisions, along with many other bipartisan proposals that have been offered, deserve action in the House without delay.

However, this type of House package is only one piece of a comprehensive approach to this crisis that must also include boosting resources in the near term to help communities and families struggling with the impacts of addiction. One of the most urgent requests we have heard from law enforcement officers, public health officials, and community leaders is for funding to address this growing epidemic. We must treat this problem like the emergency that it is, and give those responding to the crisis the tools, support and resources they need right now. To this end, we hope that the House will be allowed to consider an emergency supplemental appropriations measure, supported by House Democratic Leadership, that will provide $600 million immediately toward the opioid crisis as an urgent, first-step investment, while recognizing that more will be needed moving forward.

Addiction does not differentiate between race, gender, wealthy or poor, urban or rural, red or blue. We urge you to lead your caucus to do the right thing by addressing this crisis as we would any other public health emergency. We cannot afford to play politics with this epidemic. We must take immediate steps to quell this crisis now through authorizations ***and*** emergency appropriations.

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Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

ANN McLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress

ALMA S. ADAMS
Member of Congress

DONALD S. BEYER, Jr.
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI
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KATHY CASTOR
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