



**A COALITION TO END  
THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC**  
*Opioids are narcotic painkillers & heroin*

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September 16, 2015

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch  
Chairman  
Committee on Finance  
United State Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Finance  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden:

On behalf of dozens of organizations on the front line of our nation's prescription opioid and heroin crisis and on behalf of hundreds of thousands of American families devastated by opioid addiction, we are writing to you about a Senate Finance Committee investigation launched in 2012. We respectfully request that you make public the findings from this investigation.

On May 8, 2012, Senators Grassley and Baucus sent letters to three opioid manufacturers and seven non-profit organizations that have promoted aggressive opioid use. In their letters to these groups, they wrote:

“There is growing evidence that pharmaceutical companies that manufacture and market opioids may be responsible, at least in part, for this epidemic by promoting misleading information about the drugs' safety and effectiveness.”

The Senate Finance Committee investigation sought information on efforts by opioid makers and nonprofit groups to encourage aggressive opioid prescribing for common conditions like low back pain, where risks of use outweigh benefits. These efforts led to a sharp increase in opioid prescriptions and consequently to soaring rates of addiction, overdose deaths, infants born opioid-dependent, and other health and social problems. According to the CDC, overexposure of our population to opioid painkillers has also led to a new heroin problem.

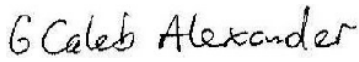
Opioid overdoses, once rare in the United States, have caused more than 220,000 deaths (175,000 from painkillers and 45,000 from heroin) since 1999. That is more than double the number of American lives lost in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan combined. In other words, the efforts by opioid manufacturers to increase opioid prescribing have led to a public health catastrophe that may take decades for our country to recover from.

Senate Finance Committee staff spent several months collecting and sorting through the records they requested. Regrettably, the findings from this investigation have never been shared with the public. This is why we are writing to you.

The results of the investigation are not simply a matter of historical importance. Some of these same companies and non-profit groups have continued to promote aggressive opioid use and continue to block federal and state interventions that could reduce overprescribing. In addition, some of the individuals mentioned in the Committee's letters to drug companies continue to work as advisors to federal agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health.

To bring our nation's epidemic of opioid addiction to an end, we must reduce overprescribing of opioids. This goal will be difficult to achieve if opioid makers, and the groups they fund, continue to promote aggressive and inappropriate prescribing. We urge you to release the findings from the Committee's investigation of their activities.

Sincerely,



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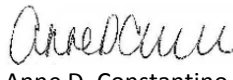
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