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TIM RYAN
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
13TH DISTRICT, OHIO

April 19, 2017

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

Dear President Trump:

We lose 144 people every day to drug overdoses in the United States. Drug overdose deaths are now the number one cause of accidental death in our nation. In 2015, we lost over 52,000 Americans to this terrible epidemic. We can no longer turn a blind eye to the catastrophic nature of this ongoing crisis. That is why I call on you to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to declare the opioid epidemic a Public Health Emergency.

Under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, the Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services may determine that “a disease or disorder presents a public health emergency.” Clearly, the growing destruction and despair that the country is experiencing due to heroin and prescription drug addiction fits that description.

States and communities continue to struggle to respond to this crisis. We are continually seeing emergency rooms, child care services, law enforcement, judges, and morgues overwhelmed and lacking the resources, staff, and space to respond effectively. With the increase of the use of carfentanil and fentanyl, the dangers and risks of this epidemic continue to rise.

Declaring this crisis as a Public Health Emergency will increase funding available and allow for our states and communities to respond with the full support and resources of the federal government.

The numbers don't lie. Men and women, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers are dying from this addiction. The problem is only getting worse and we must act now. Do the right thing and declare the opioid epidemic a Public Health Emergency and help save lives. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

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