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Dear Members of United States Congress:

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic, which continues to devastate families and communities across our nation. We respectfully request that you act expeditiously to pass H.R. 1185 – Opioid Patients’ Right to Know Act of 2021 that currently is in the House Subcommittee on Health.

According to recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 841,000 people have died since 1999 from a drug overdose. Opioid overdose deaths have risen from 50,000 in 2019 to nearly 70,000 in 2020. Not surprisingly, the global pandemic has only served to exacerbate and accelerate an already horrific situation as individuals have wrestled with isolation, job loss and even the loss of family members who contracted COVID-19. As such, now is **not** the time to turn back the clock and eliminate a powerful and effective tool in the fight to save lives.

The Opioid Patients’ Right to Know Act (H.R. 1185) will save lives by encouraging and supporting states to pass laws informing all patients, and the parents of patients, of the potential for dependency and addiction to an opioid - at the time it is most needed - before it is prescribed; and, by making patients aware of alternatives to opioids that exist for their acute pain. These life-saving conversations between prescribers and patients will also help to identify the signs and symptoms of dependency and encourage securing of these drugs in the home to prevent diversion to others, especially children.

Furthermore, this bill requires the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to award grants to states to educate health care providers about opioid prescribing practices. To receive a grant, a state must have a law or regulation that requires providers to, before issuing an initial opioid prescription to treat acute pain, inform patients about the risks of opioids and the availability of non-opioid treatment alternatives. States must use the grants to educate providers about relevant laws or regulations and safe opioid prescribing recommendations.

This common sense legislation, requiring a conversation between prescriber and patient before an opioid-based painkiller is prescribed and a discussion of potential alternative treatments when appropriate, is now law in 18 states: New Jersey, Rhode Island, Nevada, Maryland, Michigan,

Oklahoma, West Virginia, California, Ohio, Connecticut, Utah, Washington, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Florida and South Carolina as well as one of the recommendations of the President’s National Opioid Commission. Our goal is to make it the law in every state.

This extremely important goal can be made a reality if the House of Representatives passes the Opioid Patients’ Right to Know Act. H.R. 1185 will amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize grants to certain States to inform patients about the risks of opioids and their analogues, and for other purposes. Congressional support to combat the opioid crisis is not a partisan issue. In fact, House Members from both political parties are Co-sponsors of this legislation. We respectfully ask that the Opioid Patients’ Right to Know Act be moved out of the Subcommittee on Health, where it has been since February 19, 2021, and onto the House floor as soon as possible where all members – both Democrats and Republicans – vote to pass the extremely important legislation.

We welcome continued dialogue with the House of Representatives Leadership, individual House Members, and their respective staff on making this critical reform legislation permanent on a federal basis, and we offer ourselves and organizations as a resource. Thank you for your attention on this topic. Please contact FED UP! Coalition Executive Chairperson Emily Walden at emily.walden@feduprally.org or FED UP! Advocacy Committee Member Angelo Valente at <mailto:valente@preventopioidabuse.org> for questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

FED UP! Coalition
Louisville, KY

Prevent Opioid Abuse
Newark, New Jersey

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