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Press Release



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ICYMI: Governors Hassan, Baker, McAuliffe and Herbert Op-ed: Help Us Respond to Opioid Epidemic

CONCORD – Today as the nation's Governors meet in Des Moines, Iowa, Governor Maggie Hassan, Vice Chair of the National Governors Association (NGA) Health and Human Services Committee, Massachusetts Governor and HHS Committee Chair Charlie Baker, Utah Governor Gary Herbert, and Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe [wrote an op-ed calling for additional federal action to help states combat the heroin and opioid epidemic.](#)

On Friday, Governor Hassan and Governor Baker will hold a press conference at 2 PM EST to discuss efforts with their fellow Governors through the NGA to combat the heroin and opioid crisis, [including the opioid compact that was announced yesterday](#), before hosting a session on opioid abuse with U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell and other stakeholders at 2:30 PM EST. [A livestream of the session will be available here.](#)

[Click here to read the op-ed at the Des Moines Register](#)

Governors: Help us respond to opioid epidemic.

Across the country, the heroin and opioid crisis claims the lives of 78 people every day. This horrible epidemic is the most urgent public health and safety challenge currently facing states.

As governors, there is hardly a room that we walk into where we don't encounter someone affected by addiction. The harsh reality is that many of us know someone, be it a family member, best friend, neighbor, classmate or colleague, affected by the surge in opioid addiction. And surge it is—since 1999, the rate of deaths from opioid overdose has nearly quadrupled, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The crisis reaches beyond its victims and their loved ones to the health care workers, first responders and law enforcement officers who literally staff the front lines of the opioid epidemic every day in our communities. It is devastating families, businesses and communities in every corner of our country.

A challenge of this magnitude requires an unparalleled amount of coordination among all levels of government. States have been leading the way in working to save millions of citizens' lives and put an end to this epidemic.

As the leaders of the National Governors Association and the NGA Health and Human Services Committee, each of us has worked with our fellow governors to bring attention to this issue and highlight successes some states have already had with addressing the epidemic.

As governors, we have developed a comprehensive approach to combating the epidemic that focuses on prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery while supporting the law enforcement community.

Governors have taken bold action, limiting opioid prescription amounts, putting life-saving naloxone in the hands of first responders, educating the public and doctors, increasing access to treatment and recovery programs, and enhanced support for those with addictions.

As proactive as states have been, this is a national epidemic that requires national solutions.

In February, governors, through the NGA, released a list of priorities to address the opioid crisis. Among them were a number of requests for federal action and a call for Congress to provide sufficient resources to help states and communities turn the tide of this epidemic.

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These requests include helping states expand access to inpatient treatment for Medicaid enrollees with substance use disorder; expanding access to medication-assisted treatment, including lifting or eliminating the cap on the number of patients a provider can treat with buprenorphine; and improving provider education and training on pain management and safe opioid prescribing.

This week Congress is expected to pass legislation that will address the crisis. The nation's governors applaud Congress for including some of our recommendations that confront the challenge of opioid and prescription drug abuse, but we continue to urge legislators to provide real and immediate funding.

None of us can afford one more day of failing to act on an affliction that sees no difference in geographic regions or political parties, and continues to claim the lives of our loved ones.

Governors ask for immediate action and look forward to partnering with those in Washington who can help us defeat the epidemic of opioid addiction.

Gov. Charlie Baker of Massachusetts is the chair of the National Governors Association Health and Human Services Committee. New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan is vice chair. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert is the chair of the NGA Executive Committee and Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe is vice chair. The NGA is meeting in Des Moines this week.

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