



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

*For science. For action. For health.*

December 17, 2021

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney  
Chair  
House Committee on Oversight and Reform  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Maloney and Senator Warren:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write in strong support of the Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency Act.

Opioid products have had a staggering toll on public health, with 446,032 deaths involving opioids taking place between 1999 and 2018. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already-growing epidemic, with 275 Americans succumbing to opioid-related deaths each day in 2020 – an increase of nearly 30% over the previous year. The newest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a total of 97,516 overdose deaths from June 2020 to May 2021. The opioid epidemic is also an epidemic of disparities, with less-educated populations and lower-income populations suffering at higher rates. Combating this epidemic and slowing the rate of opioid-related death will require a multi-pronged strategy of investing in our currently underfunded public health infrastructure, increasing funding for treatment and recovery with targeted access for at-risk populations, increasing access to naloxone and increasing funding for primary prevention activities and to address social determinants of health.

The CARE Act is a comprehensive approach to halting the opioid epidemic. Importantly, the bill would provide \$4.6 billion in annual funding for states, territories and tribal governments with an additional \$3.3 billion annually for the hardest hit counties and cities, \$2 billion in annual funding for activities including public health surveillance and health professional training and \$1 billion in annual funding to expand access to overdose reversal drugs like naloxone. The bill also has a focus on expanding access to evidence-based treatment and recovery support services modeled after the Ryan White program. We commend you for introducing this important public health legislation. The provisions included in the bill would help save countless lives while increasing access to essential services and narrowing existing disparities, all of which are crucial steps toward achieving the healthiest nation in one generation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD  
Executive Director