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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2803

March 8, 2019

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

I am writing to ask for your support in funding veteran opioid treatment programs in your FY2020 budget. A 2011 study of the VA health system showed that veterans are twice as likely to die from an accidental opioid overdose compared to the general population. A 2016 National Health Interview Survey showed high levels of chronic pain and more severe pain than nonveterans, with young and middle-aged veterans suffering the most pain. The prevalence of pain among veterans increases the risk of substance abuse. This epidemic has become even more prevalent as the rate of substance use disorders among veterans has grown from 3.7 percent among pre-Vietnam-era veterans to 12.7 percent among those who served in the military since September 2001.

Nevada is home to over 200,000 veterans who deserve functional programs that provide the quality of care needed for chronic pain and opioid addiction management. In 2016, Nevada ranked 13th in opioid painkiller prescription rates, at 80.7 per 100 residents, compared to a national average of 66.5. As Nevada has used critical federal funding to combat this crisis, the National Safety Council named Nevada as one of only two states to meet all six key actions for ending the opioid crisis in 2018. Funding for opioid treatment programs saves lives and protects Nevada veterans and their families.

In the past two years, there has been strong bipartisan support for veteran opioid treatment programs. Just last year, funding for the VA's Opioid Safety Initiative received \$400 million. This funding is essential to build upon the VA's opioid treatment programs and to ensure that non-VA providers treating veterans through the Community Care programs have access to and are following VA's safety and prescribing protocols. I urge you to continue to fight our nation's opioid crisis and to support our veterans by funding veteran opioid treatment programs at a robust level in FY2020.

Sincerely,

Susie Lee

Member of Congress