

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 29, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

Thank you for your efforts to fight drug abuse and overdose, especially among young people. As part of a comprehensive strategy to address the growing rate of overdose deaths due to heroin and prescription opioids, we urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to take action to encourage the availability of naloxone and other opioid antagonists at schools for use in the event of an emergency opioid overdose.

As the heroin crisis grows and overdose deaths increase, there is a growing risk of overdoses occurring at school. In May 2015, a high school student in Pennsylvania overdosed on heroin at school and was taken to the hospital. According to the Centers for Disease Control 2013 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 17.8 percent of high school students had used a prescription drug, including opioids at least once in their life, 2.2 percent had used heroin, and 22.1 percent had used, sold, or been offered drugs on school property.

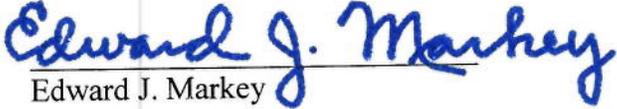
The National Association of School Nurses recommends that school nurses facilitate access to naloxone in schools. Illinois, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont all have laws or programs allowing school nurses and other personnel to administer naloxone at schools. The majority of these states, however, do not provide any funding for the acquisition of naloxone, or training in its use, and few schools have decided to maintain a supply at this time.

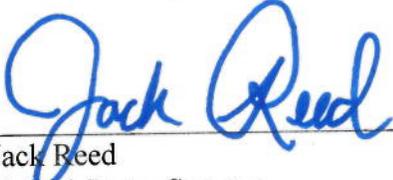
We encourage HHS to utilize existing programs to assist schools in the acquisition of naloxone and the training of school nurses and other personnel in its use. We urge HHS to make it clear to states that Substance Abuse Block Grant funds can be used to fund naloxone purchases and training programs for schools. We also urge HHS to make grants available for schools to purchase naloxone through the Rural Opioid Overdose Reversal program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Prescription Drug Overdose: Prevention for States program, and any other program that might help schools acquire naloxone and train nurses and other personnel in its application.

Too many young people have already lost their lives due to opioid drug overdoses. Access to naloxone can save lives, and we do all we can to make this life-saving medicine available for overdose prevention in schools. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

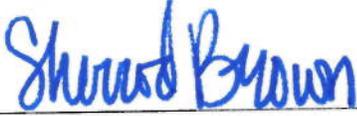
Sincerely,

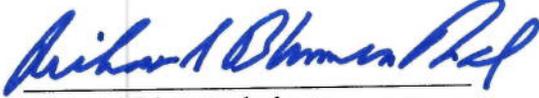
  
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