

# GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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## Attorney General Racine Joins Colleagues from 37 States Urging Congress to Pass Bill Addressing Heroin and Opioid Epidemic

*Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 before Judiciary Committees*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – As states continue to address the epidemic of heroin and opioid-based painkiller abuse and addiction and its devastating effect on public health and safety, Attorney General Karl A. Racine today joined his colleagues from 37 states in signing a joint letter to the leadership of the Committees on the Judiciary for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives urging passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 (S. 524/HR 953).

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act would provide the District and other states with the necessary tools to more effectively confront the growing challenge of heroin and opioid abuse and addiction. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdoses now surpass automobile accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death for Americans between the ages of 25 and 64. More than 100 Americans die as a result of overdoses in this country every day – more than half of them caused by prescription drugs or heroin.

In the letter, the attorneys general write, **“Law enforcement has always been on the front line when it comes to drug crises, but we cannot arrest ourselves out of this current epidemic. Research shows the best way to address this challenge is through a strategy that includes prevention, law enforcement, reduction of overdose deaths, evidence-based treatment, and support for those in, or seeking, recovery.”**

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 will:

- Expand prevention and educational efforts – particularly ones aimed at teens, parents and other caretakers, and aging populations – to prevent the abuse of opioids and heroin and to promote treatment and recovery;
- Expand the availability of the life-saving drug naloxone to law enforcement agencies and other first responders to help reverse the deadly effects of overdoses;
- Expand resources for prompt identification and treatment of incarcerated individuals suffering from addiction disorders by collaborating with criminal justice stakeholders;

- Expand disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications to keep them out of the hands of children and adolescents;
- Launch an evidence-based opioids and heroin treatment and intervention program to assist in treatment and recovery throughout the country; and
- Strengthen prescription-drug-monitoring programs to help states monitor and track prescription drug diversion and to help at-risk individuals access services.

**“Heroin and opioid abuse are emerging problems nationwide, and local jurisdictions like the District need better tools to help keep families from experiencing the tragedies of addiction, overdoses and death,”** Attorney General Racine said. **“Drug addiction is a treatable disease, but only about 10 percent of those who need treatment are receiving it. The ultimate way to fight heroin and opioid abuse is not only responsively through law-enforcement efforts, but proactively through increased access to treatment.”**

A copy of the letter sent to the Senate and House Judiciary Committees on the Judiciary is attached.

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