

April 18, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
United States Senate  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Including Important Draft Legislation offered by Senator Young in OCRA

Dear Senators Alexander and Murray:

On behalf of our pain patient and pain management professional members and other organizations whose members care about the millions of Americans living with chronic pain, we thank you and the Committee for your leadership in drafting the Opioid Crisis and Response Act of 2018 (OCRA). We are writing to request that you include draft legislation offered by Senator Todd Young which is vital to understanding and ameliorating the opioid crisis in the mark-up of the OCRA legislation. Senator Young's legislation entitled "Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act of 2018" recognizes the inter-relationship of the nation's chronic pain and misuse and overdose opioid epidemics and proposes to combat them through vital collection, analysis and dissemination of data.

Chronic pain is the most prevalent, costly, and disabling health condition in the US. Painful arthritic, musculoskeletal and back/spine disorders are the leading causes of disability in America.<sup>12</sup> Studies from the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) and Department of Veterans Affairs found that 100 million American adults, and 80 percent of veterans returning from recent conflicts, live with some level of chronic pain, at an annual cost of \$560-635 billion in direct medical costs and lost productivity.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the pervasiveness and cost of chronic pain in both our civilian and military populations, our nation conducts very little research on chronic pain, especially epidemiological research. As

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5816a2.htm>

<sup>3</sup> National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) Report: *Relieving Pain in America, A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education and Research*. The National Academies Press, 2011. [http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=13172&page=1](http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13172&page=1).

<sup>4</sup> Lew HL, Otis JD, Tun C, Kerns RD, Clark ME, Cifu DX. Prevalence of chronic pain, posttraumatic stress disorder, and persistent post-concussive symptoms in OIF/OEF veterans; poly-trauma clinical triad. *J Rehabil Res Dev*. 2009;46(6):697-702.

a result, little is known about all the diseases, conditions, syndromes and serious injuries that result in chronic pain, the number of American living with each of these conditions, the treatments they have tried, nor the safety or effectiveness of these treatments. With very little high-quality data to go on and with cost always an issue, opioids have often been prescribed to ease pain severity and suffering while other treatments that may provide relief are identified through trial-and-error.

Currently, there is no concerted effort within the CDC to ascertain and make publicly available high-quality data on chronic pain. Like the CDC's extensive efforts to understand and surveil opioid misuse and abuse, it is critical that the agency begin to study and surveil the burden of chronic pain including its health consequences in terms of morbidity, mortality and disability. Senator Young's bill also includes expanding the quantity, quality and accuracy of data on prevalence, impact and treatment over time of chronic pain overall, for specific chronic pain conditions and types, and within specific populations. National surveillance efforts are necessary in order to evaluate the impact of implementing new policies including new treatment interventions.

Senator Young's proposed legislation to establish a National Chronic Pain Surveillance System would fill the gaping need for epidemiological data on chronic pain. This system would collect, store and analyze data pertaining to all aspects of chronic pain and would be updated and maintained on an on-going basis for use by other agencies such as the FDA, NIH, CMS, AHRQ and DoD as well as by independent and private sector researchers to make important decisions of high relevance to the opioid crisis and to the appropriate care of people living with pain. Such decisions could identify which treatments are effective for different types of pain and what is the right volume of medications necessary to treat conditions of high prevalence, and many others.

It is essential that healthcare policy decisions, particularly those affecting the care of millions of Americans be based on updated, accurate data. We simply do not have this data on chronic pain – the most prevalent, costly and disabling health condition in the US. We call on you to remedy this egregious lack of information by including Senator Young's excellent "Advancing Research for Chronic Pain Act of 2018" in the important OCRA legislation that you are formulating. We thank you for your consideration of this issue. We are pleased to provide any information or assist the Committee's efforts in any way. Please contact Cindy Steinberg, National Director of Policy and Advocacy, US Pain Foundation at [csteinberg@rcn.com](mailto:csteinberg@rcn.com) or 781-652-0146.

With Sincere Appreciation,

Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health  
Academy of Integrative Pain Management  
Alliance for Balanced Pain Management  
Alliance for Patient Access  
American Academy of Pain Medicine

American Massage Therapy Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Society for Pain Management Nursing  
American Society of Acupuncturists  
National Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain Association  
Chronic Migraine Awareness  
Chronic Pain Research Alliance  
Clusterbusters  
Coalition for Headache and Migraine Patients  
Danielle Byron Henry Migraine Foundation  
Ehlers-Danlos Society  
Eleventh Hour Films  
For Grace: Women in Pain  
Global Healthy Living Foundation  
Headache and Migraine Policy Forum  
A Healing Place – The Estates  
Hospice and Palliative Nursing Association  
Human Arts Association  
Integrative Health Policy Consortium  
Integrative Medicine Access  
Integrative Medicine for the Underserved  
The International Association of Yoga Therapists  
Interstitial Cystitis Association  
Migraine Again  
Migraine World Summit  
Miles for Migraine  
National Headache Foundation  
Professionals for Rational Opioid Monitoring and Pharmacotherapy  
Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association  
Runnin' for Research  
The Pain Community  
TMJ Association  
US Pain Foundation

CC: HELP Committee Members