

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

DELEGATION OFFICE

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

(202) 224-8962

June 20, 2019

Director Robert R. Redfield, MD
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Redfield:

The New Mexico Congressional Delegation writes in support of the application submitted by the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) for the Overdose Data to Action grant, CDC-RFA-CE19-1904, as funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

New Mexico has been uniquely burdened by the opioid epidemic, with opioid overdose-related deaths currently accounting for approximately 48 percent of all drug overdose deaths in the state. In 2017, our state's drug overdose death rate was about 13 percent higher than the United States rate. Though this epidemic touches all corners of our state, rural communities are especially affected. Rio Arriba County, a small rural community in northern New Mexico, experiences 85.8 overdose deaths per 100,000 people – this statistic is more than six times the national average and is one of the highest overdose death rates of any county in the country.

To confront this crisis, New Mexico needs strong leadership and a bold vision coupled with sufficient resources to match. We are proud that the NMDOH has been a leader in drug overdose prevention for many years, and its plan for utilizing the Overdose Data to Action funding will expand upon novel strategies to confront the crisis. Specifically, the proposal will enhance surveillance and prevention of opioid overdose across the state. If awarded, NMDOH reports that it will utilize grant funds to increase prescriber registration in its Prescription Monitoring Program and deploy new metrics that will enable the state to better identify high-risk prescribing behaviors. These improved monitoring capabilities will provide data to the State and its partners that will inform efforts to reduce risk factors for substance use disorders and promote engagement with appropriate treatment services.

The opioid epidemic is one of the gravest public health crises our nation has ever faced, and we are committed to advocating for resources that ensure New Mexico can effectively combat it. It is in all of our interests to direct federal funding to areas of high need, and New Mexico is undoubtedly one of those states. We view the CDC's decision on the Overdose Data to Action

grant award as a unique opportunity to fund one of only five majority-minority states in the country that has been profoundly affected by this epidemic.

We express every confidence that the NMDOH is an outstanding applicant and request that you give the application thorough consideration within the CDC's guidelines. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Representative



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Deb Haaland
United States Representative



Xochitl Torres Small
United States Representative