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June 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy® (NABP®), I write to thank you for your dedication to ensuring a robust and continued federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pharmacists and state boards of pharmacy are on the frontlines of the pandemic in every community across the nation, providing testing, vital medications, and counseling to help Americans stay healthy during these uncertain times.

Unfortunately, the current public health emergency has occurred against the backdrop of an existing crisis that has upended the lives of millions of Americans in recent years—the opioid epidemic. As you consider subsequent legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic, I urge you to support robust investments in federal programs to combat the opioid crisis and to consider how pharmacists play an essential role to fight both the pandemic and the ongoing epidemic.

As you may know, NABP® is a nonprofit association that protects public health by assisting member boards of pharmacy and offering programs to promote safe pharmacy practices for the benefit of patients. We are proud to represent the boards of pharmacy of all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and all ten Canadian provinces. As a nonprofit association, we support a wide variety of programs and services all underscored by our vision statement—innovating and collaborating today for a safer public health tomorrow. From inspection support to licensure transfer, examinations, and accreditation, NABP is involved in every step of pharmacy compliance and health promotion across the country.

As our nation has grappled with the opioid crisis, NABP has armed pharmacists and communities with the appropriate tools to combat opioid abuse and overprescribing while promoting an active role for pharmacists in expanding access to overdose reversal drugs. As early as 2011, NABP recognized the need for authorized users in different states to communicate and share data from state Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PMPs) across state lines. This data sharing is key to reducing drug abuse and doctor shopping. We are pleased to report that currently 51 of the 54 PMPs in the US are

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connected to NABP's PMP InterConnect®, which processes more than 58 million data requests and 178 million responses each month.

As a pharmacist and public health advocate, I am concerned about a potential rise in opioid overdoses and abuse cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the current pandemic ensued, we were already losing nearly 130 Americans per day to this ongoing public health emergency. However, Congress has demonstrated great leadership in recent years with the passage of significant substance use disorder legislation including the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act* and the *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act*. Programs authorized in these laws have the potential to greatly diminish the harm caused by opioid abuse in our nation. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cited that drug overdose deaths decreased from 2017 to 2018, providing hope that with continued coordinated efforts, we can turn this crisis around. However, COVID-19 could reverse much of this hard-fought progress. Early data has demonstrated that the economic downturn, prolonged periods of social distancing, and overall uncertainty of COVID-19 have caused an increase in opioid-related mortality in at least 30 states.

Congress must continue to consider the damage caused by the opioid epidemic and proactively invest in countermeasures to ensure this crisis is not further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. NABP was pleased to see [19 senators](#) recently write to you on this topic, urging your attention and support for robust federal funding of opioid and substance abuse prevention, treatment, surveillance, and recovery programs across the federal government. I am glad to offer my support of the senators' efforts and offer NABP as a resource to congressional leadership as we all continue to combat the pandemic and the ongoing opioid epidemic in communities across the nation.

Thank you for your continued leadership and your attention to my request. Please consider NABP as a resource as you consider COVID-19 legislation as well as other public health policies, including those impacting the practice of pharmacy.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
BOARDS OF PHARMACY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Carter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Al Carter, MS, PharmD, RPh
Executive Director/Secretary
National Association of Boards of Pharmacy