



1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Catherine E. Pugh, Mayor
Leana S. Wen, M.D., M.Sc., Commissioner of Health

April 17, 2018

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
U.S. House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cummings:

On behalf of the Baltimore City Health Department, I give my full endorsement of the Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency (CARE) Act. This bill is a comprehensive approach to ensuring the federal government distributes sufficient funding to those engaged in addressing the opioid epidemic on the ground. This bill also represents a transformative attempt to make sure critically-needed resources are targeted to the areas of greatest need.

Baltimore City has the highest overdose fatality rate of any metropolitan county in America. Baltimore experienced 694 deaths in 2016 compared to 167 in 2011 – a quadrupling over 5 years, mostly attributable to fentanyl. At least 25,000 people are living with opioid addiction in Baltimore. Since I issued a standing order for naloxone in 2015, nearly 37,000 residents have been trained and nearly 1,800 lives have been saved just by everyday residents; the Health Department could easily distribute more, but we have had to ration our limited supply due to a lack of funding.

The CARE Act's language mirrors the Ryan White Act, which used evidence-based public health principles to successfully bolster local government programs seeking to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS. Similarly, the CARE Act provides direct funding to state, local, and municipal governments, reducing the bureaucratic delays to providing treatment and prevention resources. Importantly, the funding will be apportioned based on severity of need, meaning that those who are at the highest risk of not receiving the care they need will not be left out in the cold.

I am proud to endorse this legislation, and applaud Representative Cummings and Senator Warren for their commitment to thoughtfully addressing the epidemic of opioid addiction.

Sincerely,

Leana Wen, MD, MSc
Baltimore City Health Commissioner



1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Catherine E. Pugh, Mayor
Leana S. Wen, M.D., M.Sc., Commissioner of Health