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 **Heller, Bennet Introduce Bill to Combat Opioid Crisis**

 **WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) today introduced the Every Prescription Conveyed Securely (EPCS) Act to combat opioid overdoses by requiring electronic prescriptions for controlled substances under Medicare. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Pat Toomey (R-PA) are cosponsors of the legislation, and a companion bill, H.R. 3528, was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congresswoman Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Congressman Markwayne Mullin (R-OK).

In 2016, over 42,000 Americans and more than 600 Nevadans lost their lives due to opioid drug overdoses, including from prescription painkillers. A Department of Justice report found that misused prescription opioids are often obtained illegally using forged or altered prescriptions and by consulting multiple doctors (“doctor shopping”). The report also determined that most prescription fraud remains undetected.

“Drug overdoses claim the lives of hundreds of Nevadans each year, which is why it is critical that we do everything that we can to stop the opioid epidemic from touching one more family,” **said Heller.** “This bipartisan legislation takes a critical step toward eliminating doctor shopping and duplicative or fraudulent prescriptions. I appreciate the Administration’s engagement on this issue, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass solutions to address the opioid crisis that continues to rip through communities in Nevada and around the country.”

“When I visited Otero County, Colorado, last year, I met families struggling to find addiction treatment centers for their loved ones and police using antidotes for opioid overdoses almost daily as they patrolled the streets,” **Bennet said.** “An epidemic of this magnitude requires us to address all aspects of the problem, starting with how providers prescribe opioids. Coloradans deserve action from Congress, and this bipartisan legislation would expand a critical tool to track the use of opioids, ultimately reducing overdoses and saving lives.”

The Every Prescription Conveyed Securely (EPCS) Act aims to reduce the number of opioids obtained through fraudulent prescriptions or doctor shopping. The legislation would direct health care providers to use electronic prescribing for controlled substances for Medicare Part D transactions beginning in 2020. Electronic prescriptions would generate real-time information on opioid use and streamline the prescription process for both providers and their patients.

“Families across Pennsylvania are being torn apart by the opioid epidemic,” **Toomey said**. “This commonsense measure will help improve tracking of opioid prescribing and reduce diversion due to forged prescriptions. This is a simple but important step in the direction of curbing opioid abuse.”

“We need to be using every tool at our disposal to fight the opioid epidemic,” **Warren said.** “I’m glad to partner with Senator Bennet on a bipartisan bill that will help gather better data on the opioid epidemic while also helping health care providers make the best decisions for their patients.”

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