

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:**Megan Taylor |
| April 19, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller Cosponsors the Opioid Crisis Response Act**

**WASHINGTON**– A champion of supporting and authoring bills to address Nevada’s drug crisis, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today announced that he’s cosponsored the Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018, S. 2680, a sweeping proposal that aims to improve the federal response to the opioid epidemic.

In Nevada, 665 people died from drug overdose in 2016, according to the latest data available from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/nevada/nevada.htm) (CDC). Further, [Nevada’s drug overdose mortality rate stands at 21.7 percent](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/nevada/nevada.htm), higher than the national average of 19.8 percent.

“Our country is in the throes of an urgent opioid crisis, and Nevada is no exception. I want to help communities in our state heal from this drug epidemic and for our loved ones to have the resources and treatment they need to continue on a path of recovery. That’s why I’m proud to join Senators Lamar Alexander and Patty Murray on this bill, which represents a multi-pronged approach to fighting this battle,” **Heller said.** “I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this bill in the U.S. Senate. Too many Nevadans have been struck by this tragedy and it is time that Congress sends a strong message to them, and all Americans, that we recognize their grief by passing this bill."

Specifically, the legislation will improve the ability of the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services to address the crisis, including the ripple effects of the crisis on children, families, and communities, and improve data sharing between states. It reauthorizes grants to states for drug prevention and treatment and also improves detection and seizure of illegal deadly drugs through stronger FDA and Customs and Border Protection coordination.

The U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will hold a markup on this bill on Tuesday, April 24, 2018.

Heller has a long history of supporting legislation to confront Nevada’s drug problem. Last month he also [helped introduce a bill to strengthen penalties for fentanyl](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/heller-helps-introduce-bill-to-crack-down-on-fentanyl-traffickers) distribution and trafficking to ensure they better reflect the serious nature of the crime. Additionally, earlier this year he joined Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) in introducing the [Every Prescription Conveyed Securely (EPCS) Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/2/heller-bennet-introduce-bill-to-combat-opioid-crisis), a bipartisan bill that requires electronic prescriptions for controlled substances under Medicare.

**Background: The Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018**:

* Reauthorizes and improve grants to states and Indian Tribes for prevention, response, and treatment of the opioid crisis, authorized in 21st Century Cures, for three more years.
* Spurs development and research on non-addictive painkillers, and other strategies to prevent, treat, and manage pain and substance use disorders through additional flexibility for the NIH.
* Clarifies FDA’s regulatory pathways for medical product manufacturers through guidance for new non-addictive pain and addiction products.
* Encourages responsible prescribing behavior by clarifying FDA authority to require packaging and disposal options for certain drugs, such as opioids to allow a set treatment duration—for example “blister packs,” for patients who may only need a 3 or 7 day supply of opioids—and give patients safe disposal options.
* Improves detection and seizure of illegal drugs, such as fentanyl, through stronger FDA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection coordination.
* Clarifies FDA’s post-market authorities for drugs, such as opioids, which may have reduced efficacy over time, by modifying the definition of an adverse drug experience to include such situations.
* Provides support for states to improve their Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) and encourage data sharing between states so doctors and pharmacies can know if patients have a history of substance misuse.
* Strengthens the health care workforce to increase access to mental health services in schools and community-based settings and to substance use disorder services in underserved areas.
* Authorizes CDC’s work to combat the opioid crisis, including providing grants for states, localities, and tribes to collect data and implement key prevention strategies.
* Addresses the effects of the opioids crisis on infants, children, and families, including by helping states improve plans of safe care for infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome and helping to address child and youth trauma.
* Authorizes the Department of Labor to address the economic and workforce impacts for communities affected by the opioid crisis, through grants targeted at workforce shortages for the substance use and mental health treatment workforce, and to align job training and treatment services.
* Improves treatment access to patients by requiring the Drug Enforcement Administration to issue regulations on how qualified providers can prescribe controlled substances in limited circumstances via telemedicine.
* Allows hospice programs to safely and properly dispose of unneeded controlled substances to help reduce the risk of diversion and misuse.

###

