

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

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

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Health, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of many organizations on the front line of our nation's prescription opioid and heroin crisis and on behalf of hundreds of thousands of American families devastated by opioid addiction, we are writing to you in opposition to the recent nomination of Dr. Scott Gottlieb to be the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration.

As has been well documented, our nation continues to combat an opioid addiction epidemic that is striking every community in the country. We all are numbed by the continued horrific increase in overdose deaths involving opioids which rose from 28,647 in 2014 to 33,091 in 2015. Heroin overdose deaths rose from 10,574 in 2014 to 12,990 in 2015, an increase of 23 percent. Heroin continues to flood our communities and new threats in the form of fentanyl and carfentanil are continuing to emerge virtually unstopped. When final 2016 statistics are revealed by the CDC, those deaths are expected to be even more gruesome.

Despite some progress in changing federal policies and legislation as well as the commitment of additional dollar resources in 2016, much more needs to be done.

For years, we have seen the FDA continue the approval of new opioid drugs and new uses of opioid drugs in the face of empirical evidence that directly implicates the overuse of these powerful narcotic painkillers in the explosion of opioid addiction and mortality. We are particularly troubled by the excessive influence the pharmaceutical industry has on FDA decisions and we cannot allow the FDA to continue underestimating the risks associated with opioids, approve new uses or formulations, or shorten approval processes.

We, the undersigned organizations fighting the epidemic of opioid addiction, are particularly disturbed by Dr. Gottlieb's current and past ties to the pharmaceutical industry. Media reports indicate that Dr. Gottlieb has accepted several hundred thousand dollars from drugmakers in recent years, served on numerous drug and medical device

manufacturer company boards and has established numerous corporate ties as a current venture capitalist. More disturbingly, Dr. Gottlieb has advocated for expediting the drug approval process for new drugs -- advocating that efficacy requirements associated with that process be eliminated. At a time when there are over 30 opioid painkiller alternatives available on the US market and our country consuming over 80% of the world's opioid painkillers, we need more careful and considered review processes in place to protect the health and safety of all Americans and not less.

To bring our nation's epidemic of opioid addiction to an end, we must reduce the overprescribing and overuse of opioids. This goal will be difficult to achieve if the FDA continues to be complicit in the expansion in available opioid drugs in the US. The FDA mission should be to protect the health and safety of our citizens and not the business models of pharmaceutical companies.

We urge you to oppose the nomination of Dr. Gottlieb to be the next Commissioner of the FDA. Many lives are at stake.

Sincerely,

Addiction Haven
Advocates for the Reform of Prescription Opioids, Inc
Altus Treatment Center
Consoling Partners/Addiction Loss
FED UP! Coalition to End the Opioid Epidemic
Justice's Fight
Mid-Shore Restoring Hope in Women
National Coalition against Prescription Drug Abuse
National Physicians Alliance
Norfolk District Attorney, MA (Michael W. Morrissey)
OvertakenLives.org
Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing (PROP)
Recovering U
Shatterproof
Steve Rummler Hope Network
STOPPNOW
The Open Doorway of Cape Cod, Inc

