



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

April 19, 2017

Dear Governor:

As you are all too aware, the nation is facing a serious opioid crisis. Each state and territory across our country is dealing with the painful consequences of this epidemic. As I begin my tenure as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), I do so with a profound commitment to addressing this public health crisis as one of our top three Departmental priorities.

Opioids were responsible for over 33,000 deaths in 2015; this alarming statistic is unacceptable to me. We cannot continue to lose our nation's citizens to addiction. Through a sustained focus on people, patients, and partnerships, I am confident that together we can turn the tide on this public health crisis.

President Trump recently announced the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. This Commission is tasked with studying the scope and effectiveness of the federal response to this crisis and providing recommendations to the President for improving it. HHS is uniquely positioned to contribute in this important effort as a key agency providing critical resources for care and treatment.

Last year, your state/territory applied for the Opioid State Targeted Response grants. These grants aim to increase access to treatment, reduce unmet need, and reduce overdose related deaths. I understand the urgency of this funding; however, I also want to ensure the resources and policies are properly aligned with and remain responsive to this evolving epidemic.

Therefore, while I am releasing the funding for the first year immediately, my intention for the *second* year is to develop funding allocations and policies that are the most clinically sound, effective and efficient. To that end, in the coming weeks and months, I will seek your assistance to identify best practices, lessons learned, and key strategies that produce measureable results.

Thank you for your collaboration and partnership as we move forward in this critical work together to help the millions of Americans hurt by this public health crisis. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact our Acting Director of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, Nikki Bratcher-Bowman, at nikki.bratcher-bowman@hhs.gov or (202) 690-6060.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Thomas E. Price", is written over a horizontal line.

Thomas E. Price, M.D.