

THE NEW ENGLAND COUNCIL

September 4, 2015

The Honorable John Larson
U.S. House of Representatives
1501 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 1725, The National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (NASPER) Reauthorization Act of 2015

Dear Representative Larson,

The New England Council, the nation's oldest regional business association, shares the concerns of our leaders in Congress about the opioid abuse crisis plaguing our nation and we appreciate the many legislative efforts to address this devastating problem. The Office of National Drug Control Policy has indicated that drug treatment facilities are seeing record numbers of admission for heroin and other opioid addictions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdoses now surpass automobile accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death for Americans between the ages of 25 and 64, with 120 Americans dying as the result of overdose each day. The New England region has experiences particularly high levels of opioid abuse in recent years. As you may know, New England was one of five "High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas" recently selected by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy for federal support under its Heroin Response Strategy.

Opioid abuse is not just a public health problem, but an economic problem. In the United States, prescription opioid abuse costs were about \$55.7 billion in 2007. Of this amount, 46 percent was attributable to work-place costs (e.g., lost productivity), 45 percent to healthcare costs (e.g., abuse treatment), and 9 percent to criminal justice costs. In 2011, opioid abuse cost health insurers an estimated \$72 billion annually in medical costs. And of course, for employers of all types and sizes, healthy, productive employees represent their greatest asset and are critical to continued growth.

Experts agree that one of the most effective tools to prevent opioid abuse and addiction are prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) that offer timely access to accurate prescription information. Further, particularly in a geographic area like New England where individuals can quickly and easily travel across state lines, it is critical that PDMP data can be shared between states.

To that end, The New England Council hopes that you will support bipartisan legislation introduced by your New England colleague, Representative Joseph Kennedy, along with Representative Ed Whitfield of Kentucky. The **National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (NASPER) Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1725)** would reauthorize the NASPER program to support state PDMPs in order to ensure that appropriate law enforcement, regulatory, and state professional licensing authorities have access to prescription history information for the purposes of investigating drug diversion and prescribing and dispensing practices of errant prescribers or pharmacists. The bill also would authorize the Drug Enforcement Administration or a state Medicaid program or state health department receiving non-identifiable information from a controlled substance monitoring database to make such information available to other entities for research purposes.

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We believe that this piece of legislation would have a tremendous impact on efforts to combat the opioid abuse crisis here in New England and across the nation, and we hope that you will consider supporting it. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at ehaisig@new-englandcouncil.com or (617) 365-2647.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily J. Heisig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily J. Heisig
Senior Vice President, Communications & Federal Affairs

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