

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Rose Bigham [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 16, 2018 8:47 PM  
**To:** opioids,  
**Subject:** RE: Finance Committee request for policy recommendations

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Finance Committee's request for policy recommendations which impact programs within the Committee's jurisdiction. We appreciate the intention of Senators Hatch and Wyden in looking for answers and help in combating the opioid epidemic.

As you are aware, a long list of state and federal agencies have been asking many of these same questions and some are already imposing laborious policies for prescription opioids which have had the unintended effect of placing an undue bureaucratic burden on physicians and pharmacists nationwide. Meanwhile these changes have had no effect on the development of OUD and SUD - as these are overwhelmingly generated by the use of illicit/illegal street drugs like heroin and fentanyl. In addition, broadly limiting access to prescription opioids has had a deleterious effect on the millions of patients who rely on them for legitimate medical use.

While the questions the committee has asked are laudable we urge the Senators to use patience and discretion before enacting additional policies in this area; caution must be used to ensure that in our rush to do **\*something\*** that we don't do the wrong things. Right now, the evidence to suggest what would be right or wrong does not exist. The questions listed in the Committee's letter supposes that evidence-based care, prevention and treatment guidelines for substance use disorders already exist. The CDC, in 2016, released their guidelines designed to prevent OUD due to prescription opioids. After an exhaustive review of the existing medical literature, the CDC was forced to acknowledge that only low-quality evidence exists for most of the questions the committee has asked. It would be premature to try to implement broad policies until high-quality evidence about addiction and SUD have been created.

**The best thing that the Finance committee could do within its jurisdiction to help combat the opioid crisis is this: Allocate sufficient funding to the National Institutes of Health to develop truly effective, comprehensive, and well-designed studies on the root causes of addiction and SUD to produce high-quality evidence, upon which future policies could be based.** The committee asks for simple, affordable, immediate and effective answers to what is an incredibly complex and nuanced societal problem. Our concern is that proposed incentives submitted to the committee to remedy these problems will be unrealistically simple, and will harm far more people – inhumanely – than they will help.

As a leading patient advocacy organization, our main charter is to protect patient access to medically-appropriate pain management for legitimate pain conditions. Well-intended legislation created to address OUD/SUD has already significantly impacted patient suffering from all kinds of pain conditions throughout the country including surgical, chronic, and even hospice care. Meanwhile OUD/SUD rates continue to soar to unprecedented rates indicating that not only are these policies ineffective at solving the problem they were intended to address, but that they have irreparably damaged our Veterans and civilians in increasing numbers in the process.

We ask for your patience and discretion, and for the committee to fund long-overdue research into addiction so that appropriate and accurate policies may be implemented which are both effective at screening and treating SUD and also allow for appropriate access to necessary pain relief by the millions of Americans in legitimate need.

We appreciate your time and efforts in this critical public health matter.

Sincerely,

- Rose Bigham
- General Director for Media Communications, ATIP

Webpage: <https://atipusa.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ATIPUSA>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheATIPUSA/>

Reddit: <https://www.reddit.com/r/ATIPUSA/>



**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** *This e-mail transmission is covered by the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §2510-2521 and may contain HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL or legally privileged information, intended for the exclusive use of the individual or entity named in the e-mail address. If you are not the intended recipient, any disclosure, copying, distribution, or reliance upon the contents of this e-mail is strictly prohibited and may result in civil and criminal penalties.*