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January 22, 2018

I hope this letter finds you well. As the President's first State of the Union address nears, I am more driven than ever to hold the President accountable to his promise to fight the opioid epidemic facing our nation. Despite many things said on this topic by the President, his Administration has taken little to no action to address the growing crisis. Meanwhile, tragedies continue to mount.

Addiction and drug abuse present a grave and growing threat to our families and communities. More than 64,000 people in the U.S. died of drug overdoses in 2016, the deadliest year on record. I have seen firsthand the suffering of people dealing with addiction as well as their family and friends who are deeply affected by this disease. I have seen its effect on the lives of first responders including law enforcement officers and healthcare workers who are on the front lines of this epidemic every day.

As the Vice Co-Chair of the Congressional Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus, I have long advocated for increased access and parity for mental health and substance use care. I continue to work every day in Congress to empower treatment professionals and expand access to these vital community services, including through several pieces of legislation I have introduced over the past year.

In October, the President declared a 90-day public health emergency to tackle the opioid epidemic. Having worked for years to address the opioid epidemic and the spread of addiction, having it declared a crisis by the President was a promising step forward. Sadly, nothing of any consequence has been done. It is time for the President to back up his promises with commitment and federal resources. This issue is too important not to act.

Please be assured that I will continue my strong advocacy for legislation that helps to stem the tide of our current opioid epidemic. If you have comments or questions on any federal issue, please do not hesitate to contact my Albany office at (518) 465-0700. My door is always open.

To see my latest statements and voting record, please find me at @RepPaulTonko on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube or visit my website at <http://tonko.house.gov> and consider signing up for my e-newsletter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Tonko".

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress