

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
CONNECTICUT

COMMITTEES:

AGING

ARMED SERVICES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

JUDICIARY

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

706 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-2823  
FAX: (202) 224-9673

90 STATE HOUSE SQUARE, TENTH FLOOR  
HARTFORD, CT 06103

(860) 258-6940  
FAX: (860) 258-6958

915 LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD, SUITE 304  
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604

(203) 330-0598  
FAX: (203) 330-0608

<http://blumenthal.senate.gov>

June 30, 2017

Dr. Keith Hall  
Director  
Congressional Budget Office  
Ford House Office Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Second and D Streets, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6925

Dear Director Hall:

As Americans continue to struggle with the growing opioid epidemic gripping our nation, I write to request that you take this urgent public health crisis into account should Senate Republicans manage to produce a revised draft to the Better Care Reconciliation Act and request a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate of this measure. I strongly urge you to include in your score a detailed analysis, including estimated coverage losses, funding cuts, and services lost, related to those struggling with substance use disorder.

In Connecticut, we have felt this devastating public health crisis with growing intensity. In fact, in 2016 alone, we lost 917 Connecticut citizens to fatal drug overdoses, which marks an alarming 25 percent increase from the previous year. Sadly, the introduction of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, a drug that is 50 to 100 time more potent than morphine, has resulted in Connecticut seeing the second largest increase of fentanyl deaths in the country. While Connecticut remains one of the states hardest hit by this indiscriminate and sweeping epidemic, many other states also continue to struggle to address this public health crisis that claimed more than 33,000 lives nationwide in 2015. This trend shows no sign of slowing, as we have watched the number of opioid overdoses quadruple since 1999. As the debate on the future of our nation's health care system roars on, we can ill-afford to turn a blind eye to those that need help the most, which is why bringing this information to light is so critically important.

In light of a potential CBO estimate on a revised version of the Better Care Reconciliation Act, I request that any analysis of this proposal from your agency will examine the impact this measure will have on efforts to combat the opioid epidemic through federal health programs and the beneficiaries those programs serve. I would also request that you determine whether the \$2 billion proposed in the Senate Republican Discussion Draft will result in loss of coverage and /or limited access to substance abuse disorder support and treatment.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate