

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Attorney General Balderas Urges Passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 to Address Epidemic of Heroin and Opioid Addiction and Abuse**

*Santa Fe, NM* - Today, Attorney General Balderas and attorneys general from 36 states plus the District of Columbia sent a letter to the leadership of the Committee on the Judiciary for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives urging passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 (S. 524/HR 953). This comes as New Mexico and other states continue to address the epidemic of heroin and opioid-based painkiller abuse and addiction and its devastating effect on public health and safety in communities. The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act would provide states with the necessary tools to more effectively confront the growing challenge of heroin and opioid abuse and addiction.

“We know that addiction is a treatable disease and there is a direct correlation to many crimes like property crimes and auto theft, but we also know that only about 10 percent of those Americans who need treatment are receiving it. In New Mexico, we must move beyond simple responses to drug trends and emerging threats, and concentrate on improving addiction treatment and recovery nationwide,” said Attorney General Balderas. “That is why I am urging Congress to pass the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015.”

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. More than 100 Americans die as a result of overdose in this country every day – more than half of them caused by prescription drugs or heroin.

In the letters, the attorneys general write, “Law enforcement has always been on the frontline when it comes to drug crises, but we cannot arrest ourselves out of this current epidemic. Research shows the best way to address this challenge is through a strategy that includes prevention, law enforcement, reduction of overdose deaths, evidence-based treatment, and support for those in, or seeking, recovery.”

### **The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 will:**

- Expand prevention and educational efforts – particularly aimed at teens, parents and other caretakers, and aging populations – to prevent the abuse of opioids and heroin and to promote treatment and recovery;
- Expand the availability of naloxone to law enforcement agencies and other first responders to help in the reversal of overdoses to save lives;

- Expand resources to identify and treat incarcerated individuals suffering from addiction disorders promptly by collaborating with criminal justice stakeholders and by providing evidence-based treatment;
- Expand disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications to keep them out of the hands of children and adolescents;
- Launch an evidence-based opioids and heroin treatment and intervention program to assist in treatment and recovery throughout the country; and
- Strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs to help states monitor and track prescription drug diversion and to help at-risk individuals access services.

A copy of the letter sent to the Senate and House Committees on the Judiciary can be downloaded here:

<http://www.naag.org/assets/redesign/files/sign-on-letter/Final-Letter--CARA-2015.pdf>.

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