

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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January 14, 2016

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Attorney General Balderas Sends Letter to CDC on Opioid Drugs

Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas and 35 attorneys general sent a letter to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to urge the speedy adoption of the CDC’s Proposed 2016 Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain. New Mexico, like most of the nation, is battling an opioid and heroin addiction epidemic. The core message of the guidelines, that many patients can be treated with lower doses or alternative treatment methods, provides much-needed direction to doctors.

“In New Mexico, we are facing a prescription painkiller and heroin epidemic that is taking hold of our young people, devastating our families, and overwhelming our criminal justice system,” said Attorney General Balderas. “By stemming the flow of powerful opioid drugs we can begin to reduce painkiller addiction and the transition to heroin addiction in New Mexico. It’s time to act and I believe these guidelines are a good first step.”

The attorneys general write in the letter that the guidelines give “doctors the knowledge and confidence to prescribe opioids when appropriate, and to more safely manage patients on opioids. By better informing and guiding prescribers, these Guidelines will not only provide a string framework for providers, but they will also improve the access to opioids for patients for whom they are the best choice.”

The letter was signed by the attorneys general of Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

See attached for a copy of the letter that was delivered to the CDC.

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South Dakota Attorney General

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January 13, 2016

Via Electronic Submission

Dockets Management
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
United States Department of Health & Human Services
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: *Docket No. CDC-2015-0112*
Proposed 2016 Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain

Dear Dr. Frieden:

As attorneys general whose states and residents have been affected by the epidemic of opioid abuse, addiction, diversion, overdose, and death, we write to urge the speedy adoption of the CDC's Proposed 2016 Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain (the "Guidelines").

As statewide public officials who work collaboratively with law enforcement, we are regularly confronted with the problems caused by opioid abuse. While some states have reduced the number of deaths due to opioid drug overdose, overall deaths from overdoses continue to rise in our nation. Unfortunately, the opioid overdose deaths and emergency room visits continue to increase in proportion to the increase in prescribed opioids.¹ In order to reduce these deaths and injuries, we must provide clear guidance for prescribers to assess the appropriate balance between the potential harms and benefits of opioid use.

The increase in overdose deaths has made the efforts to improve informed prescribing both a law enforcement and public safety issue. Unfortunately, many prescribers, particularly primary care and family physicians, note they can lack clear and practical guidance in deciding when and how to prescribe opioids. Some are afraid to prescribe opioids at all, for fear that they will jeopardize their patients – or even their licenses. Others provide their patients with opioids when alternative treatments may serve as a more effective long term method of care.

We recognize that the Guidelines are just that. The Guidelines provide a foundation for practice, recognizing that doctors will need to adapt them to meet the individual needs of their patients. But the core message — that many patients can be treated with lower doses or alternative treatment methods,

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¹ See Vital Signs: Overdoses of Prescription Opioid Pain Relievers --- United States, 1999—2008; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Nov. 4, 2011.

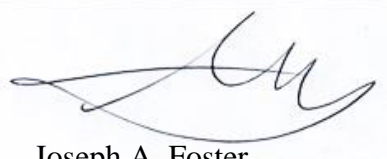
provides much-needed direction to doctors. It gives doctors the knowledge and confidence to prescribe opioids when appropriate, and to more safely manage patients on opioids. The Guidelines also recognize that opioids remain an important tool for responding to extreme or intractable pain.

By better informing and guiding prescribers, these Guidelines will not only provide a strong framework for providers, but they will also improve the access to opioids for patients for whom they are the best choice. For these reasons, we urge the CDC to promptly adopt these Guidelines.

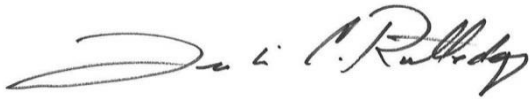
Respectfully submitted,



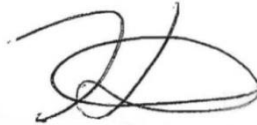
Pam Bondi
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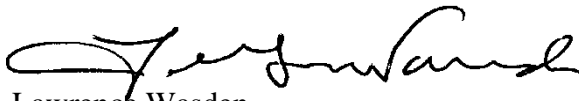
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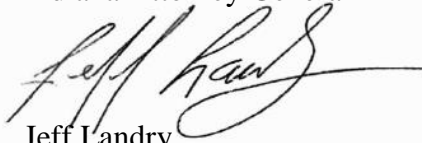
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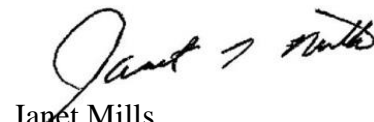
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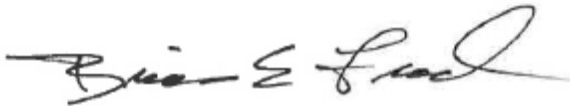
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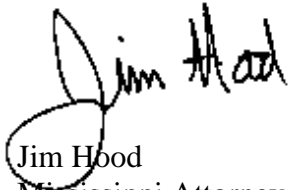
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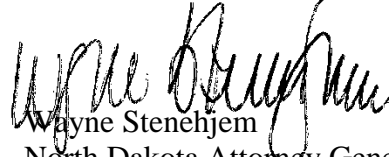
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Pennsylvania Attorney General



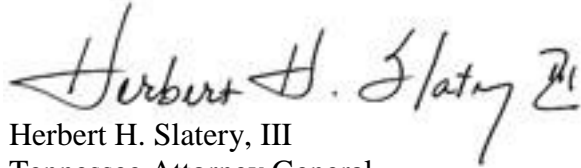
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South Dakota Attorney General



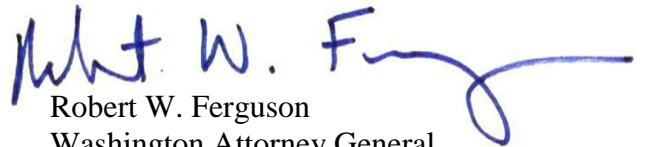
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