

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2012

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
State of Georgia
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

I would like to draw your attention to a recent article published by the Associated Press, "States fight 'tourists' trafficking painkillers,"-which chronicled how individuals are traveling to out-of-state medical clinics – or "pill mills" – that unlawfully provide them with opioid prescriptions. The article notes that as Florida has cracked down on these pill mills, there has been an increasing number of them in Georgia. Too often, pills that are illegally obtained in Georgia find their way to my home state of Ohio. I urge you to take steps to aggressively monitor prescription oxycodone and opioids in your state in order to combat the national prescription drug abuse epidemic. Failure to act aggressively in Georgia to eradicate pills mills and prevent these abuses will only sustain the drug pipeline that leads to Ohio.

I represent Ohio, a state which is directly impacted by the pervasiveness of illegal clinics in states like Georgia. Prescription drug abuse is devastating communities throughout our states. From 1999 to 2010, Ohio's death rate due to unintentional drug poisoning increased more than 372 percent. In 2008, oxycodone and other opioids caused more overdoses in Ohio than heroin and cocaine combined and in 2007, unintentional drug poisoning surpassed motor vehicle crashes and suicide and became the leading cause of injury death for the first time on record. These disturbing numbers illustrate why it is critical that we must work cooperatively at the federal, state, and local levels to combat and treat the abuse of prescription narcotics.

In Ohio, both the Strickland and Kasich Administrations have advocated for thorough and comprehensive approaches to combating prescription drug abuse. Earlier this year, the Drug Enforcement Agency established a tactical diversion squad in northern Ohio to address this epidemic, and U.S. Attorney Steven Dettelbach of Cleveland prosecuted one of the largest prescription drug trafficking cases in the country. In 2011, the Ohio legislature passed House Bill 93 to regulate the licensure of pain clinics and instructed the State Medical Board to create guidelines for the treatment of chronic pain. Further, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine has worked cooperatively with the Drug Enforcement Agency to crack down on clinics operating outside the law.

I urge you to follow their lead and work cooperatively with your state legislature and local governments to limit the supply of unlawfully prescribed and dispensed prescription drugs. This

epidemic requires a multi-pronged approach, focusing on prevention, treatment, and interdiction. Ohio's efforts to combat drug abuse demonstrate the great strides that can be made with the collaboration of federal, state, and local organizations. Your decisions on this issue have serious national implications, and I urge you to be aggressive in your efforts to combat the prescription drug abuse epidemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrod Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator