

SHERROD BROWN
OHIO

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 29, 2012

National Governors Association
Hall of the States
444 N. Capitol St., Ste. 267
Washington, D.C. 20001-1512

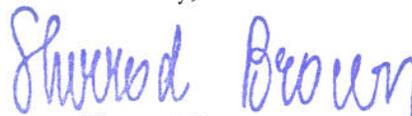
Dear Governors:

I am writing to urge you to take action in your states to combat the national prescription drug abuse epidemic. In the state of Ohio, the death rate due to unintentional drug poisoning increased more than 350 percent from 1999 to 2008. In 2008, Oxycodone and other opioids caused more overdoses in Ohio than heroin and cocaine combined. In 2007, unintentional drug poisoning became the leading cause of injury death in Ohio, surpassing motor vehicle crashes and suicide for the first time on record. Fatal and nonfatal overdoses cost Ohio taxpayers \$3.7 billion annually in hospital expenses, lost work time and quality of life measures. These troubling statistics underscore the urgent need to work cooperatively at the federal, state and local levels to combat the diversion and abuse of prescription narcotics.

Both the Strickland and Kasich Administrations have advocated for thorough and comprehensive approaches to combating prescription drug abuse. In 2011 the Ohio legislature passed House Bill 93 to regulate 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. Through the combined efforts of federal, state and local officials, nine illegal clinics or "pill mills" have been driven out of Scioto County, a community that has been severely impacted by this epidemic.

I urge you to follow their lead and work cooperatively with your state legislatures and local governments to choke off the supply of unjustifiably prescribed and dispensed prescription pain killers, and to address the drug dealing and addiction that inevitably follow. To address this epidemic states must balance efforts to prevent, treat, and interdict drug abuse. Ohio's efforts to combat drug abuse exemplify the great strides that can be made with the collaboration of state and local organizations. Your action – or inaction – has national implications, and I urge you to be proactive in your efforts to combat the prescription drug abuse epidemic.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

cc: Richard Kerlikowske, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy