

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2, 2011

Office of Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

I understand that your recent budget proposal eliminated Florida's prescription drug monitoring program. Representing a state that has seen an influx of diverted prescription drugs from Florida, I am writing to urge you to reverse course and support rigorous monitoring of oxycodone and other prescription opioids in your state.

The decisions you make in regard to prescription drug abuse in Florida will have a direct impact on Ohio, which is second only to Florida in the number of Oxycodone prescriptions filled. This unfortunate statistic underscores the magnitude of the prescription drug epidemic in my State. Ohio's death rate due to unintentional drug poisoning increased more than 350 percent from 1999 to 2008. Statistics gathered on overdoses in 2008 indicate that Oxycodone and other opioids caused more overdoses in Ohio that year 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.

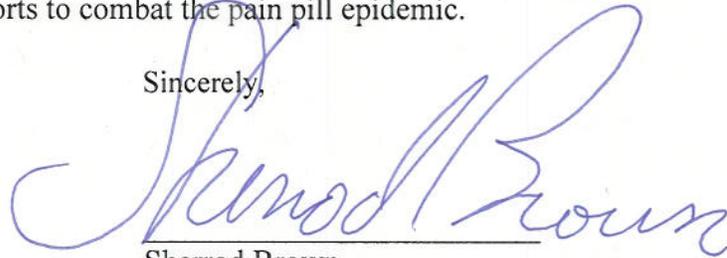
Prescription pain medications, such as Oxycodone, morphine, and methadone, are largely responsible for increasing numbers of overdoses and deaths in Ohio. Recent estimates indicate that the annual costs of unintentional drug overdose in Ohio is approximately \$3.5 Billion in "fatal" costs (including medical, work loss, and quality-of life loss associated with fatal drug overdoses) and \$31.9 Million in the costs of hospital admissions for non-fatal prescription drug incidents.

Failing to take action in Florida to combat Oxycodone abuse serves to help sustain the illegal prescription drug pipeline in your state – a pipeline that supplies Ohio and other states along the I 75 corridor. Unfortunately, the link between Florida's response to its Oxycodone epidemic and the magnitude of the problem in Ohio is not just theoretical. A recent example: In August, a couple possessing a large quantity of Oxycodone and other prescription pain pills that they had obtained from a Tampa pain clinic was arrested in Franklin County, Ohio. The sale of these pain pills would have only exacerbated a trend that is leading to increased crime, addiction, and overdose in Ohio.

Both the Strickland and Kasich Administrations in Ohio have advocated for thorough and comprehensive approaches to combating prescription drug abuse. Governor Strickland established a task force that produced strong recommendations for combating this issue, and Attorney General Mike DeWine has announced several initiatives aimed at cracking down on the

“pill mills” that offer easy – and illegal – access to prescription pain medications. I urge you to follow their lead and do everything in your power to choke off the supply of unjustifiably prescribed and dispensed prescription pain killers, and to address the drug dealing and addiction that inevitably follow. Your action – or inaction – has national implications, and I urge you to be proactive in your efforts to combat the pain pill epidemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sherrod Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "S".

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator