

Can't see the pictures? Select "Always display images" or [view this message in your browser](#).



[Homepage](#)
[Issues](#)
[Constituent Services](#)
[For Students](#)
[Press Room](#)



[Unsubscribe](#) | [Forward this email to a friend](#) | [Web version](#)

Fighting Prescription Drug Abuse

"I live in a small rural town with a big city problem."

Brittany, a nursing student from Delaware County, reached out to me about the growing prescription drug abuse problem. She is not alone.

It is an issue that touches Ohioans in all 88 counties.

Right now, people can go from doctor to doctor to obtain prescriptions for powerful pain killers and get far more than they need for their own legitimate use. Some of these so-called "pill-mills" – places that distribute addictive pain killers with minimal oversight – are located in Florida, transforming the I-75 corridor that runs from Toledo to Miami into a prescription drug abuse highway.

These pill-mills jeopardize Ohio's economy and take a devastating toll on Ohio's families and communities. It will take a combined effort to combat this growing problem. Diverting prescription drugs is illegal. Yet, it happens every day in our state.

Prescription pain medications, such as Oxycodone, morphine, and methadone, are largely responsible for increasing numbers of overdoses and deaths in Ohio. Ohio's death rate due to unintentional drug poisoning increased more than 350 percent from 1999 to 2008. Oxycodone and other opioids caused more overdoses in Ohio in 2008 than heroin and cocaine combined.

[Sign Up Here](#)
 for my
[Weekly Column](#)



[Click here to view my video about prescription drug abuse](#)

In recent years, accidental prescription drug overdoses have killed more Ohioans than auto accidents. As the national death toll doubled, deaths from prescription drug overdoses tripled in Ohio.

According to the Ohio Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force, the annual costs of unintentional drug overdose in Ohio reached \$3.5 billion in so-called fatal costs (which include medical, work loss, and quality-of-life loss) and \$31.9 million in non-fatal, hospital admitted costs.

Here are several ways we can combat this costly and deadly problem:



Sen. Brown hosting a drug diversion roundtable discussion in southern Ohio

First, I've proposed that the State of Ohio establish a Medicaid "Lock-In" program, which would crack down on the illegal use of Medicaid cards to obtain and fill prescriptions for addictive pain medications. This program would prevent prescription drug abusers from acquiring excess prescription drugs – which they may abuse or illegally re-sell – by barring them from visiting multiple doctors and pharmacies.

Second, we can continue Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs and crack down on illegal transfers from Florida. I recently urged Florida Governor Rick Scott to maintain the prescription drug monitoring program in his state. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), nearly all of the nation's top 50 Oxycodone prescribers are based in Florida.

Although every state is forced to make tough choices due to mounting budget deficits, eliminating drug monitoring programs have far-reaching implications. Florida's pain clinics funnel unlawful prescription medication into Ohio, so it's imperative that we stem this growing problem.

Next, we should increase federal enforcement and resources from the DEA. A cohesive strategy can help keep our communities safe, which is why I've convened roundtables in Ohio with local, state, and federal officials to solve this problem. I am urging the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency to redouble its efforts to shutter "pill mills" where prescription drugs are dispensed for non-medical reasons.

I have also contacted President Obama to combat Medicaid prescription fraud, which robs taxpayers and fuels drug diversion. The vast majority of Medicaid beneficiaries use their Medicaid card appropriately – but we must stop those Medicaid enrollees who have been misusing their Medicaid cards from continuing this costly and dangerous practice. I have also supported "take-back" programs for unused drugs so hospitals have a safe way to dispose of expired or unused medications.

We need to know how drugs are obtained illegally and work comprehensively to cut off the source. We cannot afford to let improper disposal, pharmacy-shopping, and doctor-hopping threaten the safety of Ohio families.

Parents who will never see their child graduate from high school because an unintentional overdose cut a young life short are left wondering why addictive pain killers are so easy to obtain. Cash-strapped local communities too often see first responders and emergency room resources diverted to address the affects of illegal prescription drug abuse.

Together, we can protect Ohio families and keep Ohio communities strong by eliminating the drug diversion epidemic in our state.

We can move forward and create safer communities by addressing the concerns of Ohioans, like the nursing student in Delaware County, who are eager to work together to eradicate prescription drug abuse – in small towns and big cities alike.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



:: Please do not reply to this email. Visit my website to contact me ::

Senator Brown's Offices

Cleveland

1301 East Ninth Street
Suite 1710
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
p (216) 522-7272
f (216) 522-2239
Toll Free
1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

Columbus

200 N High St.
Room 614
Columbus, OH 43215
p (614) 469-2083
f (614) 469-2171
Toll Free
1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

Washington, D.C.

713 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510
p (202) 224-2315
f (202) 228-6321

Cincinnati

425 Walnut Street
Suite 2310
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
p (513) 684-1021
f (513) 684-1029
Toll Free
1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

Lorain

205 West 20th St.
Suite M280
Lorain, OH 44052
p (440) 242-4100
f (440) 242-4108
Toll Free
1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

[Open the email in a browser](#)