

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 4, 2013

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

As you know, prescription drug abuse is one of the fastest-growing drug problems in our country. In fact, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, nearly one-third of first-time abusers of illegal drugs for individuals over age 12 first experienced drug abuse by abusing a prescription drug.

While many governmental health and enforcement agencies, public health groups, and other stakeholders are working to reduce prescription drug abuse, we believe that lack of coordination between all of these stakeholders could negatively impact public policy. Despite sincere efforts of both law enforcement and health providers, the problem is growing, so we must ensure that patients who need access to controlled substances have them while at the same time preventing diversion and abuse. We believe policy makers in Congress would benefit from better understanding the range of challenges that stakeholders and governmental agencies face.

Therefore, to inform Congress' work and collaboration with a range of stakeholders, we request GAO survey federal, state, local, and non-profit stakeholders on the elements that can successfully increase coordination in our efforts to combat prescription drug abuse. GAO serves a critical role in helping inform Congress with data-driven, nonpartisan analysis, and we believe your work would be very informative to us as we explore solutions to the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in America.

We suggest such a GAO survey should gather information from stakeholders about ways specific efforts to reduce prescription drug abuse are successfully coordinated between stakeholders, as well as identify areas in which a lack of coordination or collaboration may be exacerbating problems. In addition to any relevant governmental agencies the GAO may recommend, we recommend that GAO consider

surveying the appropriate representatives of the following federal, state and local governmental and non-governmental entities: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services including the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, Office of National Drug Control Policy, patient groups, pharmacists, behavioral health providers, wholesale drug distributors and other health care groups, public policy experts, state attorneys general, and law enforcement officials representing state and local law enforcement.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our request. If you have any questions about this request, please contact the relevant staff in our offices. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Tom Coburn, M.D.
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



John D. Rockefeller IV
United States Senator