

UTAH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Commissioners,

I want to personally thank you for taking up the issue of the opioid crisis and how to confront the carnage it has created in our communities.

In response to this crisis President Trump has declared that it is a Nationwide Public Health Emergency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have warned that the United States is experiencing an opioid-induced "public health epidemic."

In Utah we know that 4 out of 5 heroin users started down the road of addiction through prescribed opioid pain medication. Over 30 Utahns a month are dying as a result of opioid drug overdoses. In the last two Legislative General Sessions we have passed, in bipartisan fashion, 12 bills directly related to opioid regulations. We continue to prioritize tens of millions of dollars annually to law enforcement, behavioral health needs, treatment beds, and many other programs in an attempt to help those immersed in this crisis. We cannot keep up with the growing toll of lives lost.

It is clear that nationally, statewide, and locally we, as public servants, have to do more. The question is what more can be done? It has become clear to me that we need to pay close attention to what the Cherokee Nation, 13 states, 32 counties, and two cities across the country are doing. We must take this fight to those who have profited mightily by bringing 99% of their opioid products to a country that makes up just 5% of the world's population. There is clearly something wrong here. These drug manufacturers have marketed their products to physicians and the public with messages they knew were false.

- "Existence of scientific evidence that opioids are effective for long term use."
- "Opioids are rarely addictive if taken long term."
- "There is no maximum dosage for opioids."

Given what we know now and the consequences that resulted from this misinformation, these marketing messages don't pass the laugh test. Our state and our respective communities have a unique and important story to tell. We need to hold these drug manufacturers accountable county by county and state by state. Thank you again for your attention to this critical issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Hughes", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Greg Hughes
Speaker of the House