

United States Senate

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June 10, 2016

The Honorable Gordon Smith
President and CEO
National Association of Broadcasters
1771 N Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

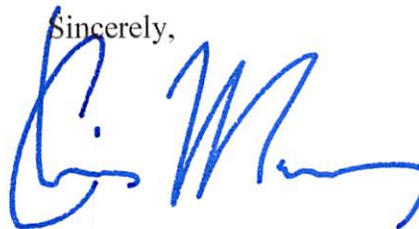
Dear Senator Smith:

As you know, opioid addiction is raging in the United States, reaching epidemic proportions. This crisis knows no cultural, racial, or economic boundaries. The Obama administration, Congress, state governments and local communities have all looked to implement a myriad of solutions – including increasing treatment capacity, reducing the overprescribing of opioids and supply of heroin on our streets. We must also break down the harmful stigma that is associated with people facing addiction and I believe broadcasters are uniquely situated to help in that effort. As a result, I would urge you to encourage your member stations to air public service announcements to raise awareness of this epidemic and frame addiction as a disease.

Too many individuals assume that addiction is the result of some failure of moral standards and good judgment – that the individual has chosen to take prescription medication or even heroin rather than just stay away from drugs. In fact, the opposite is true. It is estimated that genetic factors account for between 40 and 60 percent of a person's vulnerability to addiction. Said another way, addiction is the result of chemistry, not character. Getting this message out could help reframe people's view of those struggling with addiction and jumpstart a national conversation around stigma.

I understand that there are competing demands on our nation's broadcasters but I believe broadcasters can play an important role in stemming this insidious epidemic. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

