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United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1304

March 13, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

We are writing to request the inclusion of funding for the National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (NASPER) Act in the Fiscal Year 2009 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill.

Congress passed this legislation with bipartisan support in 2005 to address the diversion and abuse of prescription drugs. The law authorizes grants to states to establish or enhance prescription drug monitoring programs. By giving timely access to patients' prescription history, these programs can help health care providers identify patients at risk for addiction and provide an opportunity for early intervention.


Prescription drug abuse is a serious public health problem. Approximately seven million Americans report having used prescription drugs for non-medical purposes during the past month. Commonly abused prescription drugs include painkillers, depressants, and stimulants.

Despite bipartisan support, the Administration has never included funding for NASPER in its budget requests to Congress, and the program has not been appropriated. While we recognize the challenges of the current budgetary environment, we urge the inclusion of funding for this vital program in the Fiscal Year 2009 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senate



Jeff Sessions  
United States Senate