

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dean Angela Lambert, EdS
School of Nursing
219 Rock Street
Bluefield, West Virginia 24701-2100

Dear Dean Lambert,

Thank you for your leadership on education in the state and for your dedication to training West Virginia's next generation of health care professionals. You and your faculty must take great pride in the quality of practitioners who graduate from your school and in the contributions they make to the health of residents throughout our state. One area where our health care practitioners are increasingly on the frontlines – along with family members and law enforcement – is in the growing prescription drug abuse epidemic. It is for this reason that I am writing to seek your input and advice regarding ways that we can begin to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

In March, I held a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee to discuss possible solutions to prescription drug abuse. I heard testimony from health care professionals, including Dr. Jeff Coben of West Virginia University, about the dire need for better training, care coordination, and the right information at the point of care, in order to provide patients with the highest-quality and safest pain care. As a follow-up to that hearing, and in light of the ongoing challenges with prescription drug abuse in West Virginia, I wanted to also seek additional input regarding potential solutions from experts throughout the medical field. Specifically, I am interested in your answers to the following questions:

Provider Education and Training

- As you know, opioid painkillers are the most commonly-abused prescription drugs in West Virginia and nationwide. When used safely, these drugs can be an important component of treating pain. Yet, according to the independent Institute of Medicine's report, *Relieving Pain in America*, there are major gaps in knowledge about pain. What steps is your school taking to educate your students about the prescription drug abuse epidemic, safe and appropriate prescribing of controlled substances, and how to identify patients who may be seeking prescriptions for purposes that are not valid, including how to use prescription monitoring programs?
- Is your institution teaching students about ways to identify patients at risk of addiction and refer them to appropriate treatment?

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- What are the key barriers or challenges to training students in this area?
- Do you have any additional recommendations on health professions education with regard to safe and appropriate use of controlled substances?

Consumer Education

- How do you train your students on educating patients on safe and appropriate use of prescription drugs, including controlled substances?
- What recommendations do you have for improving consumer education and patient engagement more generally when it comes to safe and appropriate use of prescription medications, particularly painkillers?

Care Coordination and Health Care Innovations

- The Institute of Medicine, in its report on *Relieving Pain in America*, recommended that “undergraduate and graduate training programs should offer standardized information about pain and include experience in caring for pain in interprofessional settings.”
- What steps is your organization taking, or considering, to train health professions students to work across disciplines to help prevent and mitigate prescription drug abuse?
- Do you have recommendations for additional innovations in health care delivery that could improve prevention and treatment of prescription drug addiction and overdose?

As we approach **National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month in October**, I also wanted to make you aware of a few key events coming up in the state this week:

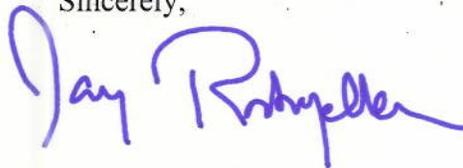
- **On Friday, September 28, from 8:30 am to 4:45 pm, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will offer a prescription drug continuing education course at the West Virginia Osteopathic School.** This course is open to physicians, dentists, nurses, physician assistants and others who care for patients receiving opioid medications. I requested that SAMHSA come to the state to offer this course because of the steep increase in deaths and overdoses from prescription drugs, especially prescription painkillers, in recent years. More information about this course is available at <http://www.wvsom.edu/MediaCenter/Sept-25-12-opioids-cme> or by calling 304-647-6358. I hope you will encourage your colleagues to attend.

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The need for your profession's expertise is essential as we seek to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic. Your responses to the above questions will be particularly helpful as I prepare to re-introduce the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (S. 507), comprehensive legislation that I have authored to address the prescription drug abuse epidemic. I look forward to your response by October 19th, 2012.

Once again, I appreciate your leadership role in health care in West Virginia and look forward to continuing our work together to fight the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in the state.

Sincerely,

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John D. Rockefeller IV

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Denise Landry, EdD, APRN, FNP-BC
Chair and Professor
School of Nursing
Marshall University
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-9510

Dear Ms. Landry,

Thank you for your leadership on education in the state and for your dedication to training West Virginia's next generation of health care professionals. You and your faculty must take great pride in the quality of practitioners who graduate from your school and in the contributions they make to the health of residents throughout our state. One area where our health care practitioners are increasingly on the frontlines – along with family members and law enforcement – is in the growing prescription drug abuse epidemic. It is for this reason that I am writing to seek your input and advice regarding ways that we can begin to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

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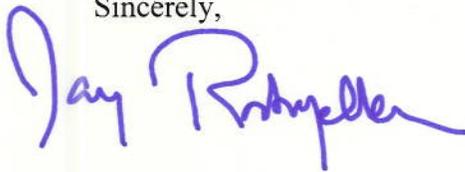
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John D. Rockefeller IV

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September 27, 2012

Dr. Sharon Mailey
Director and Chair, Department of Nursing Education
Shepherd University
Erma Ora Byrd Hall
Room 202 C
Shepherdstown, West Virginia 25443

Dear Dr. Mailey,

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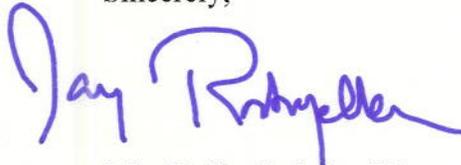
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John D. Rockefeller IV

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Dr. Stephen J. Kopp
President
Marshall University
216 Old Main
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-0001

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John D. Rockefeller IV

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September 27, 2012

Dr. Monica Kennison
Director of Nursing / Chair and Director of the School of Health Sciences
316 Washington Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia 26003-6243

Dear Dr. Kennison,

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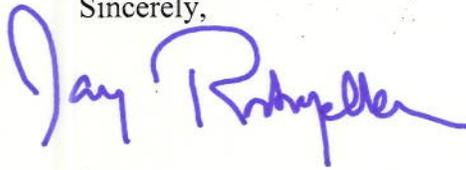
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John D. Rockefeller IV

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September 27, 2012

Dr. Judith McKinney
Chair, Nursing Program
West Virginia Wesleyan College
59 College Avenue
Buckhannon, West Virginia 26201-2699

Dear Dr. McKinney,

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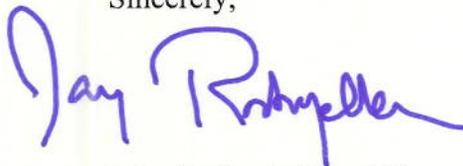
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Dr. Georgia Narsavage, PhD, CRNP, FAAN
Dean and Professor
WVU School of Nursing
Post Office Box 9600
Morgantown, West Virginia 26506-9600

Dear Dr. Narsavage,

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John D. Rockefeller IV

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dr. Arthur J. Ross III
Dean
WVU School of Medicine
Health Sciences Center
Post Office Box 9100
Morgantown, West Virginia 26506-9100

Dear Dr. Ross,

Thank you for your leadership on education in the state and for your dedication to training West Virginia's next generation of health care professionals. You and your faculty must take great pride in the quality of practitioners who graduate from your school and in the contributions they make to the health of residents throughout our state. One area where our health care practitioners are increasingly on the frontlines – along with family members and law enforcement – is in the growing prescription drug abuse epidemic. It is for this reason that I am writing to seek your input and advice regarding ways that we can begin to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

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- What are the key barriers or challenges to training students in this area?
- Do you have any additional recommendations on health professions education with regard to safe and appropriate use of controlled substances?

Consumer Education

- How do you train your students on educating patients on safe and appropriate use of prescription drugs, including controlled substances?
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dr. Dawn Scheick
Chair, Department of Nursing
Alderson-Broaddus College
101 College Hill Drive
Philippi, West Virginia 26416-9667

Dear Dr. Scheick,

Thank you for your leadership on education in the state and for your dedication to training West Virginia's next generation of health care professionals. You and your faculty must take great pride in the quality of practitioners who graduate from your school and in the contributions they make to the health of residents throughout our state. One area where our health care practitioners are increasingly on the frontlines – along with family members and law enforcement – is in the growing prescription drug abuse epidemic. It is for this reason that I am writing to seek your input and advice regarding ways that we can begin to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

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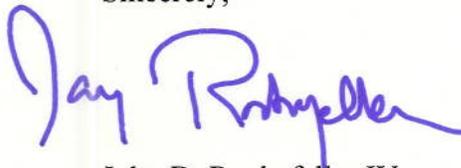
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John D. Rockefeller IV

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dr. Maria Rose
President
Fairmont State University
222 Hardway Hall
1201 Locust Avenue
Fairmont, West Virginia 26554-2470

Dear Dr. Rose,

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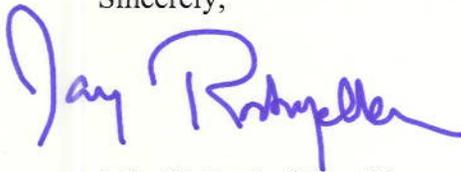
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September 27, 2012

Dr. Michael Prewitt
Dean
College of Health Professions
Marshall University
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-9500

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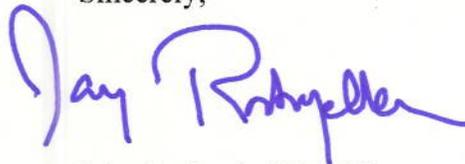
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John D. Rockefeller IV

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dr. Edwin H. Welch
President
University of Charleston
2300 MacCorkle Avenue, Southeast
Charleston, West Virginia 25304-1099

Dear Dr. Welch,

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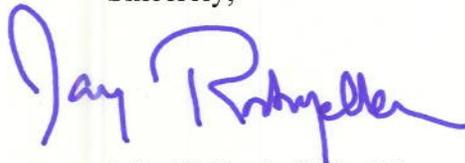
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John D. Rockefeller IV

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dr. Suzanne Shipley
President
Shepherd University
Ikenberry Hall
Post Office Box 5000
Shepherdstown, West Virginia 25443

Dear Dr. Shipley,

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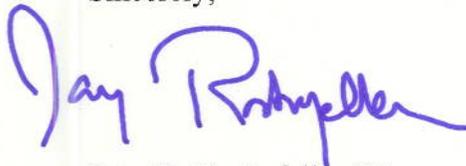
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September 27, 2012

Dr. Joseph Shapiro, M.D.
Dean
Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine
Marshall University
1600 Medical Center Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25701-3656

Dear Dr. Shapiro,

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- How do you train your students on educating patients on safe and appropriate use of prescription drugs, including controlled substances?
- What recommendations do you have for improving consumer education and patient engagement more generally when it comes to safe and appropriate use of prescription medications, particularly painkillers?

Care Coordination and Health Care Innovations

- The Institute of Medicine, in its report on *Relieving Pain in America*, recommended that “undergraduate and graduate training programs should offer standardized information about pain and include experience in caring for pain in interprofessional settings.”
- What steps is your organization taking, or considering, to train health professions students to work across disciplines to help prevent and mitigate prescription drug abuse?
- Do you have recommendations for additional innovations in health care delivery that could improve prevention and treatment of prescription drug addiction and overdose?

As we approach **National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month in October**, I also wanted to make you aware of a few key events coming up in the state this week:

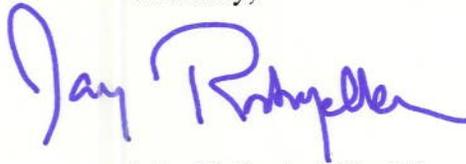
- **On Friday, September 28, from 8:30 am to 4:45 pm, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will offer a prescription drug continuing education course at the West Virginia Osteopathic School.** This course is open to physicians, dentists, nurses, physician assistants and others who care for patients receiving opioid medications. I requested that SAMHSA come to the state to offer this course because of the steep increase in deaths and overdoses from prescription drugs, especially prescription painkillers, in recent years. More information about this course is available at <http://www.wvsom.edu/MediaCenter/Sept-25-12-opioids-cme> or by calling 304-647-6358. I hope you will encourage your colleagues to attend.

September 29, 2012 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. You can find a list of all participating locations by entering your zip code at www.dea.gov.

The need for your profession's expertise is essential as we seek to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic. Your responses to the above questions will be particularly helpful as I prepare to re-introduce the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (S. 507), comprehensive legislation that I have authored to address the prescription drug abuse epidemic. I look forward to your response by October 19th, 2012.

Once again, I appreciate your leadership role in health care in West Virginia and look forward to continuing our work together to fight the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John D. Rockefeller IV". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being particularly prominent.

John D. Rockefeller IV

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4802

September 27, 2012

Dr. Kevin W. Yingling, R. Ph., M.D.
Dean
Marshall University
School of Pharmacy
Medical Education Building
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-0001

Dear Dr. Yingling,

Thank you for your leadership on education in the state and for your dedication to training West Virginia's next generation of health care professionals. You and your faculty must take great pride in the quality of practitioners who graduate from your school and in the contributions they make to the health of residents throughout our state. One area where our health care practitioners are increasingly on the frontlines – along with family members and law enforcement – is in the growing prescription drug abuse epidemic. It is for this reason that I am writing to seek your input and advice regarding ways that we can begin to stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

In March, I held a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee to discuss possible solutions to prescription drug abuse. I heard testimony from health care professionals, including Dr. Jeff Coben of West Virginia University, about the dire need for better training, care coordination, and the right information at the point of care, in order to provide patients with the highest-quality and safest pain care. As a follow-up to that hearing, and in light of the ongoing challenges with prescription drug abuse in West Virginia, I wanted to also seek additional input regarding potential solutions from experts throughout the medical field. Specifically, I am interested in your answers to the following questions:

Provider Education and Training

- As you know, opioid painkillers are the most commonly-abused prescription drugs in West Virginia and nationwide. When used safely, these drugs can be an important component of treating pain. Yet, according to the independent Institute of Medicine's report, *Relieving Pain in America*, there are major gaps in knowledge about pain. What steps is your school taking to educate your students about the prescription drug abuse epidemic, safe and appropriate prescribing of controlled substances, and how to identify patients who may be seeking prescriptions for purposes that are not valid, including how to use prescription monitoring programs?

- Is your institution teaching students about ways to identify patients at risk of addiction and refer them to appropriate treatment?
- What are the key barriers or challenges to training students in this area?
- Do you have any additional recommendations on health professions education with regard to safe and appropriate use of controlled substances?

Consumer Education

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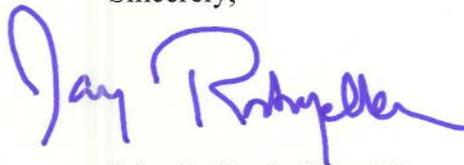
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- **The fifth National Drug Take Back Day is a great way to properly dispose of unused prescription drugs.** A majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, often without their knowledge. This event is scheduled for Saturday, September 29, 2012 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. You can find a list of all participating locations by entering your zip code at www.dea.gov.

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John D. Rockefeller IV