

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On August 31, 2021 we will observe Overdose Awareness Day, which is held in remembrance of the lives lost due to substance use disorder (S.U.D). The substance and opioid use disorder crises have affected countless families and communities across the United States. Since 1999, our nation has lost over 750,000 American lives from drug overdoses,¹ and the latest numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest an acceleration of overdose deaths during the coronavirus pandemic.

This crisis claimed over 81,000 lives just last year – the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period² – and has shown no indication of declining. The number of deaths over the decades represent more than just statistics, and remind us of Corey Merrill, Zachary Gys, and Max Baker from Massachusetts, Vincente Tambourellis from Delaware, and countless others – all whose lives were taken too soon by substance use disorder.

In light of the rising overdose deaths taking place across our country, we write to respectfully request that you order flags to be flown at half-staff on all federal buildings on August 31, 2021, Overdose Awareness Day. Our nation has mourned the loss of lives during the coronavirus pandemic by lowering flags to half-staff when we reached the grave death toll of 100,000. The lowering of our flags served as a necessary and national expression of grief. Those deaths due to COVID-19 left behind an absence in the hearts of all who knew and loved someone who passed. We are grateful for the federal government’s work in acknowledging these crises and believe that your order to lower flags at half-staff on Overdose Awareness Day would be the appropriate expression in acknowledging the lives lost to substance use disorder.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious request.

Sincerely,



LORI TRAHAN
Member of Congress



BRIAN FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress



LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/index.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p1218-overdose-deaths-covid-19.html>

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

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