Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2016

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Cummings:

Recent and troubling reports in the Los Angeles Times[1] highlight the prevalence of dangerous opioid prescribing practices and associated inaction by pharmaceutical companies that may be aware of inappropriate opioid distribution by bad actors. We respectfully request that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform initiate an immediate investigation to fully understand the implications and consequences of pharmaceutical companies that do not fulfill their legal and ethical requirements to restrict the sale of opioids in circumstances that raise suspicion regarding inappropriate prescribing practices.

The Los Angeles Times exposed egregious overprescribing practices of a clinic that employed a physician in 2008 who prescribed 1,500 OxyCotin pills in a single week, substantially more than most pharmacies sell in a month. By December of 2008, this "clinic" had prescribed more than 73,000 pills of OxyContin, and although Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, collected extensive evidence suggesting illegal trafficking of OxyContin for more than a decade, the company did not notify the appropriate federal and state authorities.

Despite red flags from pharmacists and Purdue employees about unusually high opioid sales volumes to several facilities throughout the country, the company refused to act. During the course of their inaction, sales of OxyContin at some pharmacies increased by over 1400 percent suggesting dangerous irresponsible practices, and potentially a violation of federal law.

There appears to be a pervasive disregard for patient safety and public health by some within the pharmaceutical industry. By initiating an investigation into the sale and tracking practices of the pharmaceutical industry, and the government agencies that oversee their practices, the Committee can thoughtfully consider the potential consequences to public health and determine if adequate protections are in place to minimize or eliminate future occurrences.

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[1] Ryan, Harriet and Lisa Girion and Scott Glover. "More than 1 million OxyContin pills ended up in the hands of criminals and addicts. What the Drugmaker knew." *The Los Angeles Times,* 10 July, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-oxycontin-part2/#nt=oft12aH-1la11. Accessed 23 August, 2016.

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We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request and look forward to working with you to address this important issue. If you have any questions or concern, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Copeland in Congressman DeSaulnier's Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress