Wexton’s Bipartisan EFFORT Act to Expand Research on Opioid Addiction Passes the House

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Washington, DC – Today, the House of Representatives passed Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton’s (D-VA) bipartisan Expanding Findings for Federal Opioid Research and Treatment (EFFORT) Act, which directs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to support research on opioid addiction. Wexton
introduced the bill alongside Republican
Congressman Jim Baird (R-IN) in June.

“The opioid crisis has impacted too many
families in my district and across Virginia, leaving
devastation and heartbreak in its wake.
Addiction is an illness, and if we hope to bring an
end to this crisis, we need to support adequate
scientific research and funding,” said
Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton. “This
bipartisan bill is one step towards stopping the
cycle of addiction and saving lives, and I’m
proud to have ushered it through the House.”

The EFFORT Act directs the NSF to expand
research focused on opioid addiction, allowing
for further understanding of how to more
effectively treat the many aspects of opioid
addiction. Congresswoman Wexton’s bill seeks
to close existing research gaps and promote
greater collaboration and interdisciplinary
research into the opioid epidemic.

In the western portion of Virginia’s 10th
Congressional District, overdose deaths
are outpacing 2018 rates; overall, there have
been over 200 opioid-related deaths regionally
since 2012. Across the commonwealth, the
opioid crisis has hit Virginia hard. According to
research from the National Institute on Drug
Abuse, Virginia suffered 1,241 deaths from opioid
overdose in 2017. Deaths involving synthetic
opioids (such as fentanyl) increased by tenfold
between 2012 and 2017.

“More than 200 people in the Northern
Shenandoah Valley have lost their lives to the
opioid epidemic. The effects of this public health
crisis have been seen in the number of children
in foster care, babies born substance exposed,
and grandparents now raising their grandchildren. The Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition supports the EFFORT Act because research will help to decrease preventable deaths caused by opioid overdoses and will drive better treatment approaches," said Lauren Cummings, executive director of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition.

Congresswoman Wexton is a founding member of the bipartisan Freshmen Working Group on Addiction and has been a strong advocate for addiction prevention and recovery efforts since her time in the Senate of Virginia where she served on the Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee.

The EFFORT Act is supported by the Center on Addiction, the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, the American Psychological Association, NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, and the Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition.

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Representative Jennifer Wexton (VA-02) announced that the Bipartisan EFFORT Act to Expand Research on Opioid Addiction, co-sponsored by Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), has passed the House of Representatives. The legislation elevates the National Institute on Drug Abuse's (NIDA) strategic research plan on opioid misuse to a legislative priority.

The Bipartisan EFFORT Act would authorize and fund additional research on opioids by requiring the research to be consistent with NIDA's strategic research plan. Specifically, the legislation requires NIDA to:

1. Engage stakeholders, including the National Narcotic Intelligence Board, in the development and implementation of the research plan;
2. Consider community organizations and other entities involved in drug and other substance abuse prevention and treatment programs;
3. Comply with a plan that includes targeted research needs and strategies to promote the development of new research teams and new research training opportunities.

The legislation also requires NIDA to:

1. Report to Congress on the implementation of the plan;
2. Identify areas for future research that would substantially develop addiction treatment and recovery programs;
3. Promote research on opioid misuse and addiction to improve treatment, prevention, and recovery efforts.

The Bipartisan EFFORT Act will help expand the understanding of the causes of opioid misuse and addiction and the effects of treatment, thereby increasing the chances of prevention and effective treatment for individuals and communities that are affected by opioid misuse.