



NFL PLAYERS
ASSOCIATION

April 19, 2017

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Shaheen:

The NFL Players Association strongly supports S.786, the Student and Student Athlete Opioid Misuse Prevention Act.

This important legislation would support vital education and prevention initiatives for youth, high school and college athletes, as well as training programs for parents, coaches and administrators on the dangers of the ongoing opioid crisis.

As you know, overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, exceeding car crashes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 52,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2015. The number of overdose deaths for those aged 19 and younger increased 165 percent from 1997 to 2012. The majority of these tragic cases are the direct and indirect result of the misuse of prescription opioids.

Student athletes are uniquely at risk for opioid misuse and overdose. A recent study from the University of Michigan found that adolescents participating in “high-injury” sports had 50 percent higher odds of non-medical use of prescription opioids. A 2015 National Collegiate Athletic Association survey found that student athletes are more likely to combine opioid use with alcohol than their non-athlete peers, which greatly increases the risk of overdose and death. We recognize that injury recovery and pain management will always be a part of sports. However, clearly more needs to be done to educate athletes and athletic trainers (or medical staff), coaches, and parents on best practices for safe use of pain medication and awareness of the early warning signs of substance misuse disorder.

The NFL Players Association has long been a national leader in supporting the development of youth athletes. Through our camps and community partnerships, our members donate thousands of hours each year to helping teach the joys and benefits associated with sports and an active lifestyle. In addition to helping young athletes develop their physical skills, we also work to instill the importance of health and nutrition to athletic performance. Additional federal resources and guidance to support prevention efforts regarding the dangers of unsafe opioid use for student athletes would greatly benefit our member’s ongoing work.

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To that end, we strongly support the Student and Student Athlete Opioid Misuse Prevention Act, and look forward to working with you to raise awareness of this important issue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Winston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric Winston,
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DeMaurice F. Smith". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "S".

DeMaurice F. Smith,
Executive Director