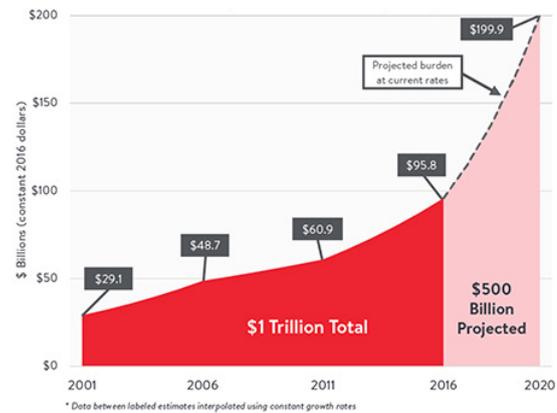


FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE OPIOID CRISIS

The federal government's response to the opioid crisis has been insufficient, underfunded and slow. As of early May 2018, only three federal funding packages have been passed that directly provided federal dollars to the opioid crisis.

The 21st Century Cures Act (Pub. L. No. 114-255) and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (Pub. L. No. 114-198) distributed approximately \$1 billion dollars to all 50 states to help fight the opioid epidemic. The bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-123) provided another \$6 billion. Of that \$6 billion, to date only \$4.65 billion has been appropriated to help states fight the opioid crisis.

\$7 billion has been allocated but it is not nearly enough.



The Economic Impact of OPIOIDS

\$55
Billion/Year

In health and social costs related to prescription opioid abuse

\$20
Billion/Year

Emergency department and inpatient care for opioid poisonings

Source: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The White House estimates that the opioid crisis costs \$504 billion a year, meaning Congress has only funded the crisis at 1.4% of the total cost.

In addition to a lack of federal dollars, the federal government has focused on strategies of penalizing individuals in pain, and working to reduce the number of available opioids on the back end by limiting the overall number of pills, reformulating OxyContin and rescheduling hydrocodone, arresting drug users, and increasing access to addiction treatment and opioid overdose reversal drugs like naloxone.

What the government has not done is effectively attempted to deal with the nation's underlying pain crisis by finding non-addictive alternative medications to prescription opioids, like medical cannabis.

Any mention of alternative pain management on the federal level has consisted of discussion of pharmaceutical products. Medical cannabis, a viable tool for the opioid crisis, has been largely ignored.

Delayed action by the federal government means we must look to the states to save lives.

The bottom line is that the federal government response to the opioid crisis has been wholly insufficient. If the government is not going to fund prevention efforts at the appropriate levels, it must step aside and let the states implement policies, including comprehensive medical cannabis programs to effectively combat the opioid crisis.

According to research appearing in Journal of the American Medical Association, states that have comprehensive medical cannabis programs have shown a 40% reduction in opioid deaths compared to states that do not have programs.

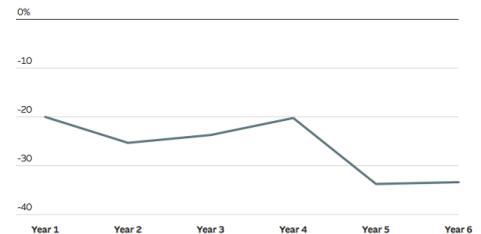
The federal government needs to let states be leaders in combating the opioid crisis.

States can work to mitigate opioid deaths by following the steps laid out in the Americans for Safe Access report *Medical Cannabis as a Tool to Combat Pain and the Opioid Crisis: A Blueprint for State Policy*.

- Create a comprehensive medical cannabis program
- Ensure the program allows for chronic pain and opioid use disorder-- without restrictions
- Educate doctors on the interactions of cannabis and opioids
- Allow patients to enroll in state medical cannabis programs without unnecessary delay
- Follow 2016 CDC guidelines and stop drug testing pain patients for THC
- Allow hospices, hospitals, and treatment centers to be caregivers and providers of medical conference
- Allow all individuals, regardless of their criminal history or probationary status to access medical cannabis programs
- Keep costs down for patients and providers.

The blueprint is available for download at: SafeAccessNow.org/opioidblueprint

Reduction in expected opioid deaths in states with medical marijuana laws, by year of implementation



Source: Journal of the American Medical Association

