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July 29, 2019

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Attorney General of Pennsylvania
Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Restitution for Cambria County from Big Pharma lawsuits

Dear General Shapiro:

By now you have undoubtedly seen the staggering opioid data released by a federal judge showing nearly 3.1 billion painkiller pills were shipped to Pennsylvania between 2006 and 2012. Sadly, and of particular outrage to me, Cambria County received the highest per-capita rate of pills at 61.5 pills per resident annually.

This figure graphically illustrates the devastation our county has suffered from the opioid crisis. As researchers routinely note, the places with the highest opioid prescription rates typically have the highest rates of overdose deaths. In Cambria, one of the opioid manufacturers' favorite dumping grounds, we lost 61 residents to overdoses in 2018 and 87 people the year before.

I commend you for joining forces with attorneys general across the United States to file suit against Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, for its over-zealous marketing of the drug. As I first wrote to you in 2017, I have long believed that pharmaceutical companies were putting their own profits ahead of known risks of addiction and were contributing mightily to skyrocketing rates of overdoses and death.

Given the depth and magnitude of the prescription abuse here, I hope that you will ensure any restitution obtained from Big Pharma lawsuits flows proportionately to Cambria County. As the county with the highest number of pills shipped per capita, we are in the greatest need of financial resources to reverse this trend and combat this life- and family-destroying problem.

Again, I applaud your efforts to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable. As your former House colleague, I continue to stand ready to work with your office to achieve our common goal of ending the scourge of opioid prescription abuse.

Sincerely,

Frank Burns
State Representative
72nd Legislative District