INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2019-135

REQUESTING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR STUDY STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE OPIOID CRISIS IN ARKANSAS.

WHEREAS, the leading cause of death for Americans under fifty (50) years of age is drug addiction, with the most prominent being opioid addiction; and

WHEREAS, drug overdose deaths in the United States have tripled since 2000, with fifty-two thousand four hundred four (52,404) deaths in 2015 and seventy thousand two hundred thirty-seven (70,237) deaths in 2017; and

WHEREAS, the impact of opioid addiction spans all generations and cuts across all socioeconomic lines; and

WHEREAS, the number of patients presenting with opioid use disorder or substance use disorder in medical clinics, community health centers, and private practices is increasing; and

WHEREAS, patients with opioid use disorder can fall through the cracks of health care, which can lead to missed opportunities for prevention and early intervention, ineffective referrals, incomplete treatment, high rates of hospital and emergency department readmissions, and opioid overdoses that could have been prevented; and

WHEREAS, when left untreated, opioid addiction and opioid misuse can cause serious medical complications and can even be fatal for mothers during or after pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, opioid addiction and opioid misuse during pregnancy is associated with low birth weight, premature delivery, fetal death, and neonatal abstinence syndrome or neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome; and

WHEREAS, dramatic increases in maternal opioid use disorder and neonatal abstinence syndrome or neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome have been
recorded since 2004, with a baby born suffering from opioid withdrawal approximately every fifteen (15) minutes; and

WHEREAS, children born suffering from opioid withdrawal may have an impact on the foster care system in a state due parents with opioid use disorder being incarcerated due to drug offenses; and

WHEREAS, to address the epidemic of drug addiction, state lawmakers across the nation are focusing on strategies to combat the opioid crisis that are both timely and uniquely tailored to the needs of their particular state; and

WHEREAS, while Arkansas has made efforts to combat the opioid crisis, the General Assembly should study all available strategies to combat the crisis and determine what strategies would benefit the citizens of Arkansas,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR OF THE NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

THAT the House Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor study strategies implemented by other states, counties, and municipalities concerning all aspects of the opioid crisis to determine which strategies would benefit the citizens of Arkansas.

BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT, upon request, the following individuals and entities provide assistance to perform this study:

(1) The Executive Director of the Mental Health Council of Arkansas, Inc.;
(2) The Executive Director of Recovery Centers of Arkansas, Inc.;
(3) The Medical Director of the Arkansas Medical Foundation;
(4) The Program Director for the Substance Abuse Treatment Clinic at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences;
(5) The Director of Pain Management at CHI-St. Vincent Health System;
(6) The Chair of the Arkansas State Medical Board Pain Management Review Committee;

(7) The Arkansas Region 1 Prevention Service Representative;

(8) The Arkansas Region 8 Prevention Service Representative;

(9) The Arkansas Drug Director;

(10) The Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care, Inc.;

(11) The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement;

(12) The Arkansas Hospital Association, Inc.;

(13) The Attorney General;

(14) The Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police;

(15) The Arkansas Sheriffs’ Association;

(16) The Arkansas State Medical Board;

(17) The Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy;

(18) The Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners;

(19) The Arkansas State Board of Nursing;

(20) The State Board of Optometry;

(21) The Department of Health;

(22) The Department of Human Services;

(23) The Department of Corrections;

(24) The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Advisory Committee;

(25) The Arkansas Board of Podiatric Medicine;

(26) The Office of Medicaid Inspector General;

(27) The Speakup About Drugs organization; and

(28) The Criminal Justice Institute within the University of Arkansas system.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Justin Boyd
District 77

Prepared by: JMB/JMB