

1 State of Arkansas
2 91st General Assembly
3 Second Extraordinary Session, 2018

HR 1002

4
5 By: Representative Ballinger

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7 **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

8 RECOGNIZING THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY CREATED BY
9 THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC IN ARKANSAS; AND RESOLVING TO
10 ADDRESS THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY AND TO SUPPORT
11 EFFORTS TO RESPOND TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.

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14 **Subtitle**

15 RECOGNIZING THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY
16 CREATED BY THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC IN
17 ARKANSAS; AND RESOLVING TO ADDRESS THE
18 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY AND TO SUPPORT
19 EFFORTS TO RESPOND TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH
20 EMERGENCY.

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23 WHEREAS, drug poisoning deaths are the leading cause of unintentional
24 injury death in the United States, outnumbering those deaths caused by
25 firearms, car crashes, suicide, and homicide; and

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27 WHEREAS, drug overdose is now the leading cause of death for Americans
28 under 50 years old and has removed 2.5 months from the average American's
29 life expectancy; and

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31 WHEREAS, overdose deaths in Arkansas have ballooned over 250% from 5.4
32 per 100,000 citizens in the year 2000 to 14.0 per 100,000 in 2016; and

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34 WHEREAS, over 1,500 people died from drug overdose deaths in Arkansas
35 from 2013 to 2015, and at least half of those deaths were opioid related; and
36 in 2016 alone, Arkansas saw the number of drug overdose deaths rise to 401,



1 of which 335 were related to the misuse of opioids; and

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3 WHEREAS, increased availability of prescription opioids corresponds
4 with increased use and overdose, and Arkansas has been particularly
5 susceptible to the rapid expansion of opioid availability; and

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7 WHEREAS, Arkansas has the second-highest opioid prescription rate in
8 the country, with doctors writing 114.6 opioid prescriptions for every 100
9 persons in 2016; and

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11 WHEREAS, Arkansas has the highest rate in the country of misuse of
12 prescription opioids by children ages 12 to 17 at 6.2%; and

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14 WHEREAS, on October 26, 2017, the President of the United States
15 declared the opioid crisis to be a nationwide public health emergency; and

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17 WHEREAS, the Arkansas General Assembly has taken steps to create and
18 improve the Arkansas Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, a program that has
19 become a model for other states; and

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21 WHEREAS, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson and Arkansas Drug Director
22 Kirk Lane have shown great leadership in response to the opioid epidemic;
23 Governor Hutchinson and Director Lane have supported legislation allowing
24 pharmacists to dispense naloxone, a temporary antidote for opioid overdose,
25 without a prescription; and they have helped establish a statewide protocol
26 for tracking the prescribing and dispensing of opioids in Arkansas; and

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28 WHEREAS, Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge has also shown great
29 leadership in response to the opioid epidemic; General Rutledge introduced
30 Prescription for Life, a first-in-the-nation educational tool that is free to
31 high schools across Arkansas through her office; and she is a cosponsor of
32 the annual Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Summit, a program that provides
33 free training and educational opportunities for law enforcement officers,
34 medical professionals, pharmacists, and educators on prescription drug abuse
35 prevention and treatment; and

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1 WHEREAS, local officials across Arkansas, including county judges,
2 mayors, sheriffs, police chiefs, fire chiefs, first responders, coroners, and
3 others, have shown great leadership in responding to the adverse effects of
4 the opioid epidemic in law enforcement, jails, the court system, local
5 communities, and families; and

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7 WHEREAS, despite the laudable efforts of state and local officials in
8 Arkansas, the opioid epidemic continues to devastate Arkansas; and

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10 WHEREAS, on January 24, 2018, Attorney General Rutledge announced the
11 state has retained outside counsel to assist her staff lawyers in
12 investigating and potentially prosecuting certain pharmaceutical companies
13 that have contributed to the opioid epidemic in Arkansas; and

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15 WHEREAS, on February 1, 2018, the Association of Arkansas Counties and
16 the Arkansas Municipal League announced that the majority of the counties and
17 cities in Arkansas are working together through the 3 risk management
18 programs that represent virtually all Arkansas cities and counties to pursue
19 litigation against pharmaceutical companies that have contributed to the
20 opioid epidemic in Arkansas; and in a unique and strategic move, the counties
21 and cities announced they will work together to present a unified front
22 against the opioid epidemic in court; and

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24 WHEREAS, the opioid epidemic nationally and in Arkansas is of
25 unprecedented magnitude, and state and local governments have an
26 unprecedented responsibility to pursue all available measures to respond to
27 the opioid epidemic and the substantial adverse impact and cost to our
28 society, local communities, and families; and

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30 WHEREAS, the opioid epidemic is best addressed by cooperation and
31 collaboration by state and local officials in Arkansas,

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33 NOW THEREFORE,

34 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIRST GENERAL
35 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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1 THAT the House of Representatives affirmatively advance and support the
2 leadership roles and efforts to respond to the opioid epidemic by the state,
3 the Governor, the Attorney General, Arkansas counties and the Association of
4 Arkansas Counties, and Arkansas cities and the Arkansas Municipal League.

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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the House of Representatives encourage the state,
7 counties, and cities to work cooperatively and collaboratively to pursue all
8 available measures to address the unprecedented opioid epidemic, including
9 without limitation unified and cohesive legal action by the state, counties,
10 and cities.

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