



## Cassidy, Murphy Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Help Save Lives of Overdose Survivors

**WASHINGTON**— U.S. Senators Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), and Chris Murphy (D-CT), members of the Senate Health Committee, today introduced the Saving Lives Through Proper Notification of Overdoses Act, bipartisan legislation to ensure health care providers have clear guidelines from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) about when they are allowed to tell a patient’s family about a nonfatal overdose in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other federal privacy laws and regulations.

“Those struggling with addiction are brought back from the brink of death in the emergency room, and then often released to battle their addiction alone and in secret,” **said Dr. Cassidy**. “We can save lives by ensuring doctors see something and say something when patients’ lives depend on it.”

“A tidal wave of addiction is devastating families and straining communities across Connecticut. Congress needs to do more,” **said Murphy**. “In emergency situations, lack of notification and information sharing can freeze out family members who need to be there for a loved one. I’m happy to work with Senator Cassidy again to help make sure first responders and doctors know they can share critical facts with family members and health providers of patients suffering an overdose.”

During a medical emergency such as a nonfatal overdose, health care providers must take into consideration a variety of federal laws and regulations governing the protection of patient information. This bill would require HHS to annually inform health care providers about permitted disclosures of patient information during medical emergencies, including nonfatal overdoses, with the goal of saving lives by alerting family members of a loved one’s struggle with addiction.

Many people die after overdosing on multiple occasions over a period of time without their family ever knowing of their condition. With proper notification in accordance with patient privacy laws, family members would have the opportunity to save a loved one’s life by helping them overcome addiction and avoid a repeat overdose.

[Recent testimony](#) to the Senate Health Committee included the story of Emmett Scannell. After he died, Emmett's family discovered he had had seven overdoses reversed at local hospitals and no one had been notified.

“How we respond to nonfatal overdoses in this country is the most important and one of the first things we should be doing,” **Jessica Hulsey Nickel, president and CEO of the Addiction Policy Forum**, [told the committee](#). “Of the nearly 64,000 people that we’re losing annually to overdoses, 70 percent of them had a previous nonfatal overdose.”

This legislation builds upon provisions authored by Cassidy and Murphy and passed into law as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act requiring HHS to identify and model programs and materials for training health care providers and patients in understanding HIPAA.

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