May 1, 2017

The Honorable Chris Christie  
Chair, President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis  
Office of Strategic Initiatives  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Governor Christie:

On behalf of the Healthcare Distribution Alliance (HDA), we are pleased that the Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis has been formed to study the effectiveness of the Federal response to drug addiction and the opioid crisis. HDA values collaboration and open dialogue, and we look forward to partnering with you as you begin your leadership of the Commission.

HDA represents primary pharmaceutical distributors — the vital link between the nation’s pharmaceutical manufacturers and more than 200,000 pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics and others nationwide. Since 1876, HDA has helped members navigate regulations and innovations to get the right medicines to the right patients at the right time, safely and efficiently.

The pharmaceutical distribution industry is committed to addressing the serious national epidemic of prescription drug abuse. Drug abuse and diversion is a complex and challenging problem that calls for a collaborative effort on the part of providers, pharmacists, distributors, manufacturers and state and federal authorities. While distributors do not prescribe or dispense drugs directly to patients, they do share a common goal with physicians, manufacturers, pharmacists, law enforcement officials and policymakers: to prevent theft and diversion and provide a safe supply of medicines to those patients with legitimate medical needs.

HDA was very supportive of bipartisan legislation that was enacted in 2016, the Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-145). This new law fosters a collaborative relationship between the pharmaceutical supply chain and federal regulatory agencies to win the fight against prescription drug abuse. Part of the law requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), in conjunction with the Food and Drug Administration Commissioner and other federal agencies, file a report to Congress on obstacles to legitimate patient access to controlled substances. This report will also identify issues with diversion of controlled substances; benefits of federal, state and industry collaboration on drug abuse; improving training and education; and enhancements to state
prescription monitoring programs. Moreover, HHS is required to consult with the healthcare industry and incorporate recommendations to address drug abuse from the medical community, patients, practitioners, manufacturers, wholesalers, pharmacies, law enforcement, insurance and other federal and state health care agencies.

We believe that the Commission’s efforts, in conjunction with those required in Public Law 114-145, to engage a wide-range of stakeholders will help foster better communication and collaboration to address the urgent challenges posed by the drug abuse epidemic.

We stand ready to serve as a resource to you and the Commission.

Sincerely,

John M. Gray
President and CEO