The abuse of heroin and prescription painkillers is having a devastating effect on public health and safety in communities across the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdoses now surpass automobile accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death for Americans between the ages of 25 and 64. More than 100 Americans die as a result of overdose in this country every day.

We know that addiction is a treatable disease, but we also know that only about ten percent of those who need treatment are receiving it. Discoveries in the science of addiction have led to advances in drug abuse treatment that can help people stop abusing drugs and resume their productive lives.

We know from researchers, the law enforcement community, and treatment providers that the most effective way to address the challenges posed is to initiate a comprehensive response to the twin epidemics of opioid and heroin addiction that includes prevention, law enforcement strategies, addressing overdoses, expansion of evidence-based treatment, and support for those in, or seeking, recovery.

While heroin and opioid abuse are a key concern, we must move beyond simple responses to drug trends and emerging threats, and concentrate instead on improving addiction treatment and recovery nationwide.

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2014 will:

- Expand prevention and educational efforts—particularly aimed at teens, parents and other caretakers, and aging populations—to prevent the abuse of opioids and heroin and to promote treatment and recovery.
- Expand the availability of naloxone to law enforcement agencies and other first responders to help in the reversal of overdoses to save lives.
- Expand resources to identify and treat incarcerated individuals suffering from addiction disorders promptly by collaborating with criminal justice stakeholders and by providing evidence-based treatment.
- Expand disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications to keep them out of the hands of our children and adolescents.
- Launch an evidence-based opioid and heroin treatment and interventions program. While we have medications that can help treat addiction, there is a critical need to get the training and resources necessary to expand treatment best practices throughout the country.
- Strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs to help states monitor and track prescription drug diversion and to help at-risk individuals access services.

Only through a comprehensive approach that leverages evidence-based law enforcement and health care services, including treatment, can we stop and reverse current trends.