

United States Senate

December 17, 2018

The Honorable Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Institutes of Health
Building 1, Room 118
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Collins,

In Montana we have a crisis wreaking havoc throughout the state: a methamphetamine epidemic. Meth is destroying families and communities, and disproportionately impacting Native American tribes. There has been a 415% increase in meth cases from 2011 to 2017 and a 375% increase in meth related deaths in that same period. As Montana and other parts of the country confront this crisis, I write to encourage the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to continue their diligent pursuit of a Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to combat meth addiction.

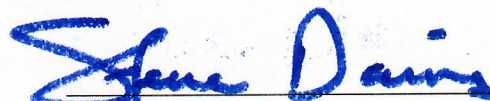
Tragically, meth use is linked to more violent crimes and robberies than any other drug. Between 2010 and 2016, violent crime increased by 35% in Montana. Law enforcement believes this increase is primarily meth related. These statistics are chilling and emphasize the need for a multifaceted approach to combat this epidemic. I have worked tirelessly to secure our border from the crossing of illegal drugs, where most meth now enters the country. At the same time, we must try and rehabilitate those suffering from meth addiction using a combination of counseling, behavioral therapies, and medications.

Unlike opioid and alcohol addiction, there is no MAT currently approved for treating methamphetamine addiction. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Director Nora Volkow, meth is one of the most difficult drugs to find medical treatment for. It is my understanding that despite this challenge, NIDA is currently funding seven ongoing clinical trials involving medications for methamphetamine addiction. While the results of these trials remain to be seen, I am hopeful that one or more of these treatments can be utilized to combat the meth epidemic in Montana in the future.

I want to commend your continued pursuit of a medical therapy to help treat meth addiction. I encourage the NIH to continue your efforts until we find a solution to assist Montanans in overcoming the meth epidemic.

Thank you for your commitment to this important issue. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance as we work together to fight the meth epidemic in Montana.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator