



# THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

## COMMITTEES:

Appropriations  
Appropriations Subcommittee on the Environment  
and Natural Resources  
Banking and Insurance  
Ethics and Elections  
Regulated Industries  
Rules

## JOINT COMMITTEE:

Joint Legislative Budget Commission

## SENATOR OSCAR BRAYNON II

*Democratic Leader*  
35th District

February 20, 2017

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor, State of Florida  
Office of the Governor  
The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor Scott:

In 2011, during the height of the pill mill epidemic in Florida and an escalating death count from prescription drug abuse, you signed legislation allowing your Surgeon General to declare a public health emergency, giving the agency wide latitude to address the emergency. This action followed your deployment of local and state law enforcement agency resources to “the center of Florida’s prescription drug battlefield” as part of a multi-pronged attack on the prescription drug abuse and pill mill proliferation.

This letter is to request that you issue a similar order urgently needed to address the growing threat and rising body count arising from Florida’s opioid-addiction crisis.

No longer confined to small urban enclaves, heroin and fentanyl have become the scourge of communities throughout Florida, wreaking widespread devastation not only from the ravages of addiction, but the resurgence of deadly diseases associated with drug abuse. There is no family, no race, no ethnicity, no income level this epidemic cannot touch, and no effective state bulwark in place to stop it.

The numbers are staggering. According to recent news reports, numbers from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement show a nearly 80 percent increase in heroin deaths and 77 percent increase in fentanyl deaths in Florida from 2014 to 2015.

By comparison, in 2011 oxycontin overdoses were killing as many as seven Floridians a day, and just last year, you declared a public health emergency after just nine cases of Zika were confirmed.

## REPLY TO:

- 606 NW 183rd Street, Miami Gardens, Florida 33169 (305) 654-7150 FAX: (305) 654-7152
- 200 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5035

Senate’s Website: [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov)

**JOE NEGRON**  
President of the Senate

**ANITERE FLORES**  
President Pro Tempore

February 20, 2017

Page 2

Last week, Palm Beach County Commissioner Melissa McKinlay wrote to you asking that you follow the lead of other governors and declare a public health emergency for Florida to help local communities overloaded and stretched to the breaking point.

On behalf of the Senate Democratic Caucus, I echo her call. Not only are the lives of Floridians at stake, but resources of the public as an increasing number of unpaid charges for emergency hospital care are passed on to insurers and paying customers. To say nothing of the high financial burdens on local governments from the growing demands on first responders and the need for an increasing supply of the anti-overdose drug, naloxone. Or the terrible consequences that begin in the womb and continue well after birth with the tiniest victims of this crisis - the babies born to addicted mothers.

This emergency will not end without our intervention and resources. I strongly urge you to take this first step and launch the response our state is still lacking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oscar Braynon, II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "O" and a long, sweeping underline.

Oscar Braynon, II  
Senate Democratic Leader