

United States Senate

November 6, 2017

Richard Pops
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Alkermes
852 Winter St.
Waltham, MA 02451

Dear Mr. Pops:

I am writing to request information from Alkermes related to the sales, marketing, and educational strategies it has employed to promote Vivitrol as a treatment for opioid addiction. Recent press reports indicate that Alkermes has pursued an aggressive lobbying and marketing campaign to increase the use of Vivitrol instead of cheaper treatment alternatives, like methadone and buprenorphine, from other manufacturers.¹

According to these reports, Alkermes has targeted much of its promotion for Vivitrol at law enforcement officials and lawmakers, efforts which have included the assignment of sales representatives to judges overseeing drug courts and free shots to inmates leaving jails and prisons.² Alkermes also appears to have promoted Vivitrol through the use of a “speaker’s bureau” composed of doctors paid to promote the drug.³ And the *New York Times* reports that Alkermes has spent \$19 million on federal lobbying.⁴

This campaign to promote Vivitrol to law enforcement officials and policy makers apparently has led to Vivitrol sales increasing from \$30 million in 2011 to \$209 million last year.⁵ As Mark Stejbach, Alkermes chief commercial officer, reportedly told investors last year, the campaign was intended to “create a gentle federal breeze to kind of sweep behind us—behind our sales really, and help ignite what is going on individually.”⁶ But experts in opioid treatment, including Dr. Daniel Ciccarone of the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine, warn that while Vivitrol is “a good tool in the toolbox . . . its rapid adoption and promotion are moving beyond the evidence base.”⁷ As a result, cheaper and more thoroughly studied treatments appear to have been stigmatized and marginalized.⁸

¹ *Seizing on Opioid Crisis, a Drug Maker Lobbies Hard for Its Product*, New York Times (June 11, 2017) (www.nytimes.com/2017/06/11/health/vivitrol-drug-opioid-addiction.html); *A Drugmaker Tries to Cash in on the Opioid Epidemic, One State Law at a Time*, National Public Radio (June 12, 2017) (www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/06/12/523774660/a-drugmaker-tries-to-cash-in-on-the-opioid-epidemic-one-state-law-at-a-time).

² *Seizing on Opioid Crisis, a Drug Maker Lobbies Hard for Its Product*, New York Times (June 11, 2017).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *A Drugmaker Tries to Cash in on the Opioid Epidemic, One State Law at a Time*, National Public Radio (June 12, 2017).

⁶ *Seizing on Opioid Crisis, a Drug Maker Lobbies Hard for Its Product*, New York Times (June 11, 2017).

⁷ *Chris Christie’s Opioid Commission and the Future of the ACA*, New Yorker (June 21, 2017) (www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/chris-christies-opioid-commission-and-the-future-of-the-aca).

⁸ *A Drugmaker Tries to Cash in on the Opioid Epidemic, One State Law at a Time*, National Public Radio (June 12, 2017).

Importantly, these efforts occur against the backdrop of the current U.S. opioid epidemic. The United States faces a public health crisis that taxes the resources of the medical system, burdens the federal budget, and most importantly, costs the lives of thousands of Americans. In Californian and other states, opioid-related hospitalization and emergency room visits doubled between 2006 and 2014.⁹ The severity of this crisis makes effective opioid addiction treatment an important priority, and it is crucial that treatment approaches rest on sound science and the best judgment of medical professionals—not the marketing and lobbying prowess of the pharmaceutical industry.

To aid the Committee in understanding current efforts to promote Vivitrol to law enforcement officials and policymakers, please provide responses to the document and information requests below:


- 1) A list of judicial officials and drug courts to which Alkermes has assigned sales representatives and the years in which the company has assigned these representatives;
- 2) Please describe the activities of Vivitrol sales representatives, including how Alkermes determines their assignments, their cultivation of participants in the “speaker’s bureau,” and their latitude to entertain or otherwise compensate participating physicians and other experts;
- 3) Please list all jails or prisons at which Alkermes has provided free Vivitrol shots, including the location of the facilities, the years in which Alkermes provided shots, the costs associated with the shots the company provided, and any contracts between Alkermes and the facilities concerning the provision of shots;
- 4) Any slide decks, presentations, talking points, or other materials Alkermes has provided to participants or speakers in the “speaker’s bureau” for Vivitrol since 2010;
- 5) Amounts paid by Alkermes to the following entities since 2010 and the purpose of those payments:
 - a. American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence
 - b. National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
 - c. American Society of Addiction Medicine
 - d. National Institute on Drug Abuse
 - e. National Association of Drug Court Professionals
 - f. National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors
 - g. Treatment Research Institute
 - h. National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
 - i. Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

⁹ California Department of Public Health, *State of California Strategies to Address Prescription Drug (Opioid) Misuse, Abuse, and Overdose Epidemic in California* (June 2016) (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/DCID/SACB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Prescription%20Drug%20Overdose%20Program/CAOpioidPreventionStrategies4.17.pdf>).

- 6) Copies of any presentations Alkermes has delivered to investors concerning its state and federal lobbying efforts;
- 7) Any studies or other data in the possession of Alkermes concerning the superiority of Vivitrol as an opioid addiction treatment as compared to buprenorphine or methadone;
- 8) Any slide decks, presentations, talking points, or other materials Alkermes has provided to speakers for continuing education events;
- 9) Copies of any continuing education materials funded in whole or in part by Alkermes that mention addiction, opioids, methadone, buprenorphine, naltrexone, or naloxone;
- 10) Copies of any educational materials provided to law enforcement personnel or judges; and
- 11) Documents sufficient to show Alkermes funding of continuing medical education modules or other educational presentations for physicians, nurses, pharmacists, or other medical professionals concerning Vivitrol since 2010, including the organizations or individuals receiving funding, the years in which they received funding, and copies of the slides, videos, handouts, promotional materials, and any other related materials produced.

Please provide your responses as soon as possible, but in no event later than December 2, 2017. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Grant Barbosa on my staff at grant_barbosa@harris.senate.gov or (202) 224-3609. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to Lizbeth_Alvarez@harris.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator