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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**AS OPIOID DEATHS RISE, WAYNE AND OAKLAND COUNTY TAKE ON DRUG COMPANIES**

*Lawsuit Seeks to Hold Drug Companies Accountable for Deceptive Marketing Practices*

**DETROIT** – Wayne County **Executive Warren C. Evans** and Oakland County **Executive L. Brooks Patterson** today announced a joint lawsuit against multiple drug manufacturers and distributors alleging the deceptive marketing and sale of opioids – a dangerous, highly addictive and often lethal class of painkillers, including OxyContin and Fentanyl. The lawsuit, the first such suit filed in Michigan, comes as opioid-related deaths continue to climb and opioid-related addiction continues to devastate communities across the country.

“This is a full-blown health crisis from which the drug companies made billions,” Executive Evans said. “People are dying and lives are being ruined by addiction as this horrible tragedy unfolds. We see the devastation every day in our hospitals, in our jails and at the morgue, and it’s getting worse. There has to be a price to be paid when corporations show such disregard for human life.”

The lawsuit alleges that one of the main drivers of the catastrophic nationwide opioid epidemic is drug manufacturers’ deceptive marketing and sale of opioids to treat chronic pain, including their concerted, coordinated strategy to shift the way in which doctors and patients think about pain and to encourage the widespread prescribing and use of opioids.

The complaint alleges that defendants intentionally misled doctors and patients about the appropriate uses, risks, safety, and efficacy of prescription opioids while downplaying the risks of addiction. The defendants in the case are Purdue Pharma, L.P., Cephalon, Inc., Endo International, PLC, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, Ltd., Teva Pharmaceuticals, USA, Inc., Insys Therapeutics, Inc., AmerisourceBergen Corporation, Cardinal Health, Inc., McKesson Corporation, Mallinckrodt PLC. and Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals.

“The opioid industry has taken a page out of big tobacco’s playbook,” Executive Patterson said. “They utilized misleading information, marketing campaigns, and studies to convince the public that their product was safe. They put profits over people and now people are paying the price, some with their lives.”

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In all, more than 183,000 people died in the United States between 1999 and 2015 from overdoses directly related to prescription opioids. In 2016, opioid-related deaths in Wayne County alone totaled 817, up from 506 in 2015, a 61% increase. Opioid related deaths in Oakland County increased 267% from 9 deaths in 2009 to 33 deaths in 2015.

Wayne and Oakland Counties have also suffered significant financial consequences that continue to grow as a result of opioid over-prescription and addiction, including increased costs for law enforcement, courts, jails, emergency and medical care services, public works, and substance abuse treatment and diversion plans.

“There was a concerted, and tragically successful effort to get more doctors to prescribe these drugs while distorting the conversation about addiction,” said Lead Counsel **E. Powell Miller** of The Miller Law Firm, which is representing both Wayne and Oakland counties. “As communities like Oakland and Wayne County continue to shoulder the burden of this epidemic, justice demands that the companies responsible pay for the tragedy they’ve created.”

The complaint alleges that defendants, including McKesson, AmerisourceBergen, and Cardinal Health which are each among the top 15 companies in the Fortune 500, have reaped tremendous profits from these practices. In 2011, pharmaceutical companies generated revenues of \$11 billion from opioid sales alone<sup>1</sup>.

The complaint was filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Plaintiffs Wayne and Oakland counties are represented by The Miller Law Firm, P.C. and Robbins, Geller, Rudman & Dowd LLP. In order to have the strongest legal representation, the Corporation Counsels of Wayne County, **Zenna Elhasan** and Oakland County, **Keith Lermينياux** sought out the most highly qualified firms to pursue this litigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Market Research Firm Frost & Sullivan cited in “OxyContin: Purdue Pharma’s Painful Medicine,” *Fortune Magazine*, <https://www.google.com/amp/amp.timeinc.net/fortune/2011/11/09/oxycontin-purdue-pharmas-painful> medicine