



# **TUSCARAWAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **TUSCARAWAS COUNTY FILES SUIT AGAINST OPIOID MANUFACTURERS, DISTRIBUTORS AND PHARMACIES**

Last year, the Board of Commissioners teamed with nationwide firm, Motley Rice LLC, and partnering firms to join nationwide litigation involving nearly 2000 lawsuits against makers and distributors of opioid painkillers. Today, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Tuscarawas County Commissioners are announcing that litigation against the manufacturers and distributors of opioid painkillers has been filed.

Previously, Tuscarawas County Prosecutor Ryan Styer stated, “It’s becoming clear that the multi-district litigation is well-underway and that settlement discussions are occurring without us at the table. It’s time that Tuscarawas County be at that table.” Styer also said, “While individual responsibility cannot be ignored, manufacturers and distributors share responsibility in creating and permitting an undue influx of opioids for decades. The devastating costs of opioid addiction in our community, some more quantifiable than others, include overdose deaths, property crimes, foster care costs, jail occupancy, treatment costs, drug court costs, and probation costs.”

The lawsuit, which was filed in the Tuscarawas County Court of Common Pleas, alleges claims related to the deceptive marketing, distribution and sale of opioids in violation of Ohio law. The litigation brings the claims with causes of action against all defendants including statutory public nuisance, common law absolute public nuisance, common law qualified public nuisance, negligence, violation of the Ohio Corrupt Practices Act, injury through criminal acts, unjust enrichment and civil conspiracy.

While the effects of the opioid epidemic are apparent nationwide, Tuscarawas County has been especially hard hit. Prescription rates in the County exceed national averages and were startlingly high in 2016 as 75.1 opioid prescriptions were dispersed for every 100 people (including children) in the County. Additionally, from 2011 to 2016, drug overdoses claimed the lives of 60 people in Tuscarawas County, with the number of deaths doubling from nine to eighteen from 2015 to 2017.

Although litigation is not the single solution to this public health crisis, the nationwide lawsuit hopes to achieve holding manufactures and distributors of prescription opioids accountable, seek assistance for the devastation opioids have caused throughout the United States and in our community, and involve stakeholders in nationwide conversations to aid in developing a sustainable solution.