

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Opening Statement Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi

Hearing on “Local Responses and Resources to Curtail the Opioid Epidemic” Subcommittee on Health Care, Benefits and Administrative Rules

April 11, 2018

I asked for this hearing today because opioid addiction is a public health crisis that has devastated neighborhoods across Illinois and communities in every state. Local communities are at the front line of this crisis, and Congress needs to listen to them.

Today we will hear from local experts who are addressing the horrific impact of opioid addiction and other substance use disorders in Ohio, West Virginia, and in one part of my district, namely DuPage County, Illinois.

In Illinois, there are an estimated 180,000 people with an Opioid Use Disorder. Every single day, I feel the impact this crisis has on so many of my constituents in DuPage, Cook, and Kane Counties. In DuPage County alone, 126 patients died of heroin overdoses and another 108 from fentanyl between 2014 and 2017.

I applaud the \$3.2 billion in new funding for opioid treatment that Congress passed this year, but Chairman Jordan and I need to know, is the federal government doing enough about this disease and is Congress supporting the most effective ways to address it?

We need to know if you have the flexibility to respond to opioids, because what works in one area is not necessarily what will work in another.

We need to know if you require more resources for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of those suffering from substance abuse disorders.

We need to know if law enforcement is going after big drug cases, not just arresting addicts.

We need to know if current law enforcement practices are preventing addicts from seeking treatment for fear of legal jeopardy.

The public health crisis of opioid addiction demands that we are committing sufficient resources, and that we are spending them efficiently and effectively.

It is critical to increase the supply and use of the highly effective opioid overdose reversal drug Naloxone, so that we can save the lives of those who overdose. We must ensure that first responders and others have sufficient supply to prevent overdose deaths in their communities.

I look forward to hearing today about evidence-based prevention efforts that have proven effective, including what we know about addressing the root causes of addiction.

I look forward to hearing about effective harm-reduction strategies for addicts with children in their household, in order to lessen the burden addiction puts on families.

Once addicts do come forward, there must be effective evidence-based treatment available to them, and they need to know where and how to find treatment. We know that various forms of Medication-assisted Treatment, or MAT, can effectively treat addiction, but current access to such treatment is woefully inadequate. Recovering addicts should have the tools and support they need to both get clean and stay clean.

I hear about this problem in Illinois nearly every day – even when people can get treatment, can get into rehab, they and their families have no support upon release. These people then struggle to maintain sobriety. I hope to hear today from our witnesses on ways to solve this problem.

Federal spending has to be accountable. One of this Committee's core missions is to identify and root out government waste, to make sure that we're not throwing good money after bad. I look forward to hearing today how scientific evidence is being used to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently and effectively in local addiction response efforts.

I hope today's hearing will provide a constructive conversation about what local communities are doing, and what the federal government should be doing, to address the opioid crisis and the disease of addiction. And I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to address this public health crisis.

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