



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2018

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Pallone's Opening Remarks at Health Subcommittee Markup of Opioid Legislation

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Health markup on "Opioid Legislation and H.R. 5554, Animal Drug and Animal Generic Drug Amendments Act of 2018:"*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today's markup will mainly focus on proposed legislation to address the opioid epidemic. This complex public health crisis facing our nation requires thoughtful, measured solutions. While I support a bipartisan process to address this crisis, I am troubled by the unprecedented number of bills, 63 in total, and the Chairman's extremely hasty timeframe to pass opioid legislation.

We can all agree that action must be taken to stymie the opioid overdose deaths ravaging our country; but taking the wrong action, because we are not spending the appropriate amount of time to get these policies right could have the very serious consequence of making things far worse. I have urged the Chairman to slow this process down, to choose quality over quantity and today I want to repeat that caution and remind this entire Subcommittee that there is no margin for error in a public health crisis of this magnitude.

Due to the rushed timeline, many of these bills are works in progress and are still in discussion draft form. These forced time constraints mean that some bills suffer from lack of technical assistance from our federal agencies or a CBO analysis. Additionally, and equally important, stakeholders have not had the opportunity to adequately evaluate these bills or weigh in on their impact.

At the end of the day, I will evaluate the bills in this Committee based on two principles: whether the proposal meaningfully improves access to treatment for opioid use disorders, or whether the proposal helps to prevent people from getting addicted to opioids in the first place.

I will also mention that as this process has moved forward, we have not yet had a conversation about offsets. The reality is that meaningful policy in this space may cost money, and agreement on appropriate offsets that do not harm people—including the very people that we may be trying to help—is a critical component needed in order for me to support these bills moving forward.

I hope to continue to work with my colleagues on today's list of bills to address the opioid crisis. But many of the policies are far-reaching, complex changes to our federal health programs. So I want to be clear that I intend to oppose any bill that does not improve access to treatment, has nothing to do with addressing the opioid epidemic, could potentially worsen the crisis, or is simply not ready in the time that we have been allotted.

It would be irresponsible to push these policies forward without understanding the full impact.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

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