

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement
of
Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Gene Green
Markup on Opioid Legislation and H.R. 5554
April 25, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CDC reported that over 42,000 Americans died from opioid overdoses in 2016, a dramatic increase from just a few years ago. This is an epidemic that is impacting communities throughout the United States that must be reversed as soon as possible.

We have heard from federal agencies, concerned stakeholders and parents of children who died from opioids over three hearings and a roundtable meeting. The main concern we consistently heard was the need for greater access to care and removing the existing barriers that prevent Americans from receiving the treatment needed to overcome opioid abuse.

During this process, I am concerned that as a committee, we have put quantity over quality. We will be considering 64 separate bills and discussion drafts during today's markup, an unprecedented number during my time on the Energy and Commerce Committee.

The fact is many of these discussion drafts have not been fully vetted by staff and stakeholders, nor received technical assistance from the appropriate agencies.

Before we proceed to the full committee markup, we must be confident that bills be fully vetted before they receive our committee's blessing.

Our committee must conduct this process with a laser-eye focus on expanding high quality, affordable treatment and ensuring the necessary continuum of care for Americans struggling with opioid addiction, especially for vulnerable populations such as post-partum mothers, foster children, and Americans leaving the correctional system.

Expanding treatment and care will take additional federal resources. I hope the Majority will seriously consider authorizing the funds necessary to help expand our nation's treatment infrastructure and make sure Americans suffering from opioid abuse have the necessary coverage.

Two bills I believe that will make a difference are the Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Centers Act, H.R. 5237, and the Misuse/Abuse discussion draft.

The Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Centers Act, which I was proud to introduce with Rep. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, will fund designated treatment centers where individuals will receive comprehensive patient-centered care for opioid addiction and other substance abuse disorders. The bill focuses on developing model practices for treatment and recovery that can be duplicated nationwide.

The Misuse/Abuse discussion draft will clarify the FDA's authority to take into consideration the potential for risks of abuse and misuse when making approval decisions. This is an important and unique consideration FDA when approving controlled substances. I believe this authority is a key part of our efforts to combat the opioids crisis and ask for the committee's support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield the remainder of my time.