

## **Remarks for Energy and Commerce Member Day**

July 25, 2019

Thank you Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today.

As many of you know, I consider addressing the addiction crisis in America to be my number one priority in Congress. My constituents sent me here in large part because we firmly agree that more must be done to stop the 192 drug overdose deaths happening every day, two-thirds of which involve opioids.

Every death from addiction connects another family and community to this crisis. My own connection is devastating but will sound all too familiar. On New Year's Eve in 2016, my nephew Ian died from a fentanyl overdose. He was 24 years old, and he died alone in a hotel room.

One of my first actions as a Representative was creating the Freshmen Working Group on Addiction. I knew that our historic freshman class could make real progress if we worked together -- across party, geographic, and demographic lines. It's bipartisan -- with 64 members from 31 states across the country. Despite our diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, we are united in our understanding of the necessity to put aside our differences and come together to save lives.

Members of our working group have introduced legislation to ease access to naloxone, to slap sanctions on producers of illegal fentanyl, to increase training for prescribers and law enforcement, to require better warning labels, to beef up federal research on addiction, and to coordinate and track federal demand reduction activities.

I was proud to work with fellow freshmen Reps. Denver Riggleman (R-VA), Kelly Armstrong (R-SD), and Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ) to introduce H.R. 2466, the State Opioid Response Grant Authorization Act.

This bill would authorize \$5 billion in funding for State Opioid Response Grants and Tribal Opioid Response Grants over five years to fight the opioid epidemic in every community across the country. Each state receives at least \$4 million through the program, with additional funding provided to the ten states with the highest mortality rates due to drug overdoses.

The bill came from conversations we had with real people in our districts. In the early days of our roles, we toured our districts. We spoke with health departments, hospitals, first responders, elected officials, police officers, incarcerated individuals, mental health professionals, early childhood organizations, and those suffering from addiction. We heard loud and clear that we need additional and consistent funding to end this crisis — funding that allows local communities to provide individualized and specific services to their community. And this legislation does just that. It gives certainty to states that we will provide them funding, and they can expect that to continue for at least the next five years.

There is no committee better positioned to make real and impactful progress on this issue than the Energy and Commerce Committee. You hold the power to advance legislation to authorize additional funding for prevention and treatment programs, to require more robust training of our medical professionals, to ease restrictions on prescribing life-saving medication-assisted treatment, and so much more. I urge you to use that power to take further meaningful steps to combat the addiction crisis, including passing a large package of legislation that will dramatically increase our response to one of the worst public health crises our country's ever seen.

I recognize the committee has taken bold action in the past by passing the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), the 21st Century CURES Act, and the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. I commend you for that. As a result, provisional data shows that for the first time since the 1990's, we are losing fewer lives to addiction related deaths than the year before. However, we should not use this statistic as an excuse to move on. Rather, we should see it as a call for additional action. What this committee has done is

working, and we need to continue taking action in order to save lives.

Thank you for the chance to share these thoughts with you today. You are engaging in important work, and I would like to be a partner with you in these efforts.