

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Diana DeGette**

***Markup of 3 Bills, Subcommittee on Health***

**July 15, 2026**

Today we are marking up three bills related to illicit drugs.

We all want to curb the spread of dangerous illicit drugs, but I am concerned these bills fall short of meaningfully improving law enforcement efforts and further our nation's addiction to criminalization. I think at best, these bills need work. At their best, I believe we need to better consider practical concerns, and at their worst, I think they just make illegal conduct more illegal.

I'm not sure these bills will help.

I'd like to turn briefly to bipartisan, common sense legislation Congresswoman Miller-Meeks and I introduced yesterday. The Cure Hepatitis C Act paves the way for our country to eliminate Hepatitis C as a major public health threat. It is a gem of an opportunity to save lives and lower costs.

Highly effective anti-viral treatments for this debilitating disease have been around since 2013, and they cure more than 95 percent of cases without significant side effects. Yet as many as four million people in the U.S. have hepatitis C. Left untreated, hepatitis C leads to a lifetime of chronic health issues and even death.

Development of a cure was one of the most remarkable medical achievements of our lifetime, but still, more than a decade after initial approval, tens of thousands of Americans die of hepatitis C every year. That's because people with the disease don't always feel sick and know they are infected, which complicates diagnosis. And because the affected population is disproportionately underserved, oftentimes in prison, so they are not consistently engaged with the health care system.

The cost of antiviral therapies is also cost-prohibitive for many—a standard regimen can cost tens of thousands of dollars without insurance. This bill would close these access gaps and put lifesaving therapeutics in the hands of those who need it by taking a pilot program pioneered by Louisiana nationwide, allowing states to partner with manufacturers to tailor treatment to different priority populations.

Passing this bill will save tens of thousands of lives. It will also save money in the health care system by reducing spending on chronic disease management, which can include expensive

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treatments for cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. In fact, a preliminary CBO estimate of this policy found it would save 6.6 billion dollars.

I'm immensely proud to have worked on this bill with my colleague from Iowa and Representatives Hank Johnson and Don Bacon as well as our Senate counterparts, Senators Cassidy and Van Hollen. Each of us is committed to passing this groundbreaking bill by the end of the year. But we need the full force of this subcommittee to do so. The solution is before us and lives are on the line, so we have not a minute to delay.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get this done fearlessly and deliberately, just as Democrats will when we are in the majority.