

**Congressman Adam Kinzinger (IL-16)**  
Statement for the Record  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
“The Trump Administration’s Response to the Drug Crisis”  
March 7, 2019

Thank you to Chairman Cummings and Ranking Member Jordan for allowing me to share my thoughts and stories on how this drug crisis is affecting our nation.

My home state of Illinois has been hit particularly hard by the opioid epidemic. In Illinois, heroin, all too often laced with Fentanyl, has become the drug of choice. A couple of years ago, I personally witnessed an overdose in a parking lot back home in Channahon, Illinois. In 2016, data from the Illinois Department of Public Health showed 2,278 drug related deaths. That’s about 6 deaths per day.

Overdose has now become the number one killer of Americans under the age of 50. Luckily, anti-overdose drugs such as Narcan and Naloxone have become widely available and are proving to be an effective tool to combat overdose deaths. But as important as these medications may be, they can only be used to deal with the dangers of the problem after it has occurred—they do not mitigate the amount of drugs supplied to this country by transnational criminal organizations.

In the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, we passed the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. This wide-ranging legislation aimed at combatting the opioid crisis was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Trump.

The administration has made this crisis a top priority. One of the most effective and most obvious ways we can help mitigate the flow of drugs into the country is to secure our borders. I applaud the administration for its commitment to fighting this epidemic—not only by signing our the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act into law, but promising to secure the southern border where we see hundreds of thousands of pounds of these drugs smuggled into our country.

Recently, I was deployed to the southern border with my Air National Guard unit. While flying surveillance missions, I saw first-hand how far the cartels and drug smugglers are willing to go to move their product across the border into the United States, which of course is devastating to our communities.

Those who accept the responsibility of protecting that border are finding it more and more difficult to locate and interdict drug traffickers due to a lack of funding for security measures—and I would like to note that we get bogged down in semantics here in Washington, but when I use the term “security measures” I mean that to include “walls” or “fencing” or “barriers” or whichever term one might wish to use.

Customs and Border Protection agents need more resources not only to build barriers to create a bottleneck for illicit border crossings, they need resources to locate, identify, and intercept those individuals smuggling both drugs and humans. It is disheartening that this is the state of play at

the southern border, and as someone with experience in these matters, I know that this is an all-of-the-above security threat that must be confronted with an all-of-the-above security strategy.

While Congress and the administration have made important strides in confronting the drug crisis in America, my encouragement is primarily derived from the efforts and motivation of members of our communities who have stepped up in this fight.

In my district, people like Luke Tomsha of LaSalle and David Armstrong of Rockford dedicate their time and effort to help others struggling with the disease of addiction. Luke started a non-profit, “The Perfectly Flawed Foundation”, to help adults and children impacted by substance use disorder. David founded “Hope in Recovery Employment” to connect those in recovery with a job.

We now see that, in order to combat the drug crisis, it takes a combination of grassroots movements with the help of the federal government—particularly through ONDCP, DOJ, and HIDTA—as well as the excellent work being done by state and local government.

Again, I sincerely thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for allowing me to share some thoughts, and I appreciate the committee’s work to address this crisis.