

Rep. Adam Kinzinger
Opening Statement—Opioid Conference Meeting
July 6, 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Today we take another step towards helping those suffering from the country's opioid crisis that. Counties throughout my district, the state of Illinois, and towns across the country, are all feeling the burden, both financially and emotionally, as a result of this devastating drug epidemic plaguing our communities.

This conference report, which may not include everything on the wish list, is supported by more than 115 various groups, because it takes a multi-faceted approach towards solving many of the most pressing issues being faced by patients, law enforcement, hospitals, and the families of those that are in need of help.

I am happy to see that this conference report puts a major focus on the treatment and rehabilitation of those afflicted with drug addiction. From dealing with increased access to overdose treatments, to the training for first responders, to the state demonstration grants, this legislation takes a truly comprehensive look at the solutions available to the community of individuals willing to help combat this epidemic.

Additionally, I am proud to support Section 105 of the conference report. This section was based in large part on legislation I introduced, H.R. 1818, that aims to help the transition of our veterans into the civilian EMT community. According to the Department of Labor, the demand for EMTs and Paramedics is expected to increase by 33 percent by 2020. This expected shortage is in addition to reports from communities across the country of current EMT shortages.

The section included in this report also expanded upon the original legislation I introduced to include a much broader category of health care professions including EMTs, paramedics, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, physical therapy assistants, and physician assistants. Our veterans receive some of the best healthcare training in the world, and anything we can do to help their transition into a civilian career, while maintaining standards, should be done with haste.

Mr. Chairman and fellow Conferees, thank you for your work on this vital piece of legislation. I hope that it will garner as much bipartisan support going forward as it has in both chambers of Congress. We must move this package forward to help our communities today.

I yield back.