

Opioid Conference Opening Statement of Chairman Fred Upton
Conference Report to S. 524
July 6, 2016

I thank our House and Senate colleagues as we formally come together to conference on S. 524. Each member will have two minutes for an opening statement and have until 6:00pm this evening to submit a statement into the record. Upon conclusion of opening statements, we will move directly into consideration of the amendments.

The simple truth is that we are in the midst of an epidemic. Nearly every 12 minutes, someone in America dies of a drug overdose. How did we get here? The CDC reports over a quarter billion opioid prescriptions were written in 2012. Abuse of prescription pain-killers and heroin has impacted every community. It is an epidemic that has no boundaries and does not discriminate. In Michigan, we are enduring 10 times as many deaths today as there were 15 years ago. And sadly, the numbers continue to surge.

But behind every statistic is a person who was loved, part of a family and community, and lost too soon.

It's a frightening reality, but we have to face this epidemic head on, and today is an important step forward. As we work to finalize a package our focus remains on attacking this public health crisis from all sides – zeroing in on treatment for addiction and overdoses, reforming prescribing practices and the delivery of medicines, and working with law enforcement.

The report touches on the spectrum of issues driving the opioid crisis. While there is no one solution, we are making progress in addressing a problem that has rapidly grown.

I thank all my colleagues – on the Energy and Commerce Committee and off - for working to advance these important bipartisan bills that will make a real difference in our communities.

There is an urgency to our work as drug overdose deaths surge in Michigan and beyond. We owe this effort to the past, present, and sadly, future victims of the opioid epidemic – our neighbors, friends, and family, across every part of the country and every demographic group. Let's come together, and get the job done.