

*Statement for the Record from July 6, 2016 – CARA Conference Committee Hearing  
Congressman Joe Courtney*

Thank you Mr. Chairman. In 2004 the Center for Disease Control tallied 7,000 Americans lost their lives to heroin and opioid overdoses. If you fast-forward to 2014, the last year they have full statistics, that number grew four times, to 28,000 Americans, who lost their lives to heroin and opioid overdoses. We know 2015, because of state numbers, is going to be worse and 2016 is off to a horrendous start as well.

Mr. Chairman, if there was an infectious disease that was causing this kind of harm to our country, if there was a natural disaster that was causing this kind of havoc to our country, this Congress would be on fire in terms of getting emergency funding out into the country to deal with this devastation. This bill contains many good provisions in terms of policy changes and authorizing language, but the absence of any real resources to help families who right now as we are sitting in this room, are scrambling to try and find a detox bed or a long term treatment bed, a police department where they have an addict in lockup that they're trying to get out and into a treatment program, an emergency room where a doctor has brought someone back to life with Narcan is watching that patient leave again with no treatment options available. We need to get much more serious about dealing with the overwhelming avalanche of harm and need that exists in this country.

The Pallone amendment, which will be offered later, provides a fully paid for amount of resources that deals with prevention, it deals with treatment, and also gives resources in terms of education and law enforcement. This is the approach that ultimately is going to make a real difference to those families, who are looking to us desperately for help so that they can help their loved ones get the treatment that we know works, and again, we have that power, we have that opportunity.

We should view this just like we would any natural disaster. We should view this like any other type of infectious disease epidemic, that again, over and over again, we as a great nation, have stood up and responded to, with real resources, to get help to the people that we represent.