

“Mr. Chairman, the opioid crisis continues unabated in our country. Families are suffering. Communities, as we know, are being torn apart. Those who are addicted are deprived of their basic freedom of will. And now, we have the chance to reverse this and give the people new hope. Government can’t end addiction. But it can support community efforts to stop opioid abuse and help those in recovery.

“Now, the House’s bill has targeted the root causes and the results of the opioid epidemic: the drug trade, prescription abuse, health care, prevention, and recovery. But we aren’t just creating new programs with the hope that more money attached to some new Washington acronym will solve our problems. Such programs are generally created with good intentions. But good intentions don’t make good government.

“This legislation uses the power of data to determine if the programs we are funding to fight opioid addiction actually work. That’s the purpose of the OPEN Act, which I sponsored with Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (MD-05) and which is part of this conference report. It gives health care officials, researchers, and engaged citizens the opportunity to see exactly what their government is doing and use that information to respond to the opioid epidemic.

“I want to thank the chairmen of the committees and all the conferees for their bipartisan work over many months to get to where we are today. But today is not where we should end. We have to finish this, and the sooner the better to save more lives. I look forward to working together to get this bill signed into law.

“I yield back.”