

I am pleased to be here today to participate in this conference committee on legislation to address the opioid crisis. This is how Congress should be working, proceeding through regular order and moving bills that make a difference in the lives of many. The policies we are discussing here today are a great step forward in the fight against the scourge of drug addiction. I look forward to seeing them reach the President's desk.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 78 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose. In New Jersey, heroin and opioid admissions accounted for 49 percent of all substance abuse admissions and there were at least 781 heroin-related deaths in New Jersey in 2014, the most recent data available.

To that end, I am pleased to see legislation I worked on with my colleague Sean Patrick Maloney, the Opioid Review Modernization Act, included in this package. This legislation will help address the rampant opioid and drug abuse epidemic by reforming and improving the medical drug approval and labeling process within the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The bill will ensure that the FDA rigorously reviews the benefits and risks of opioid pain medications and how they are communicated to prescribers and patients. Finally, the bill encourages the development and approval of opioids with abuse-deterrent properties.

The FDA has a critical role in combating our nation's opioid abuse crisis while also ensuring that patients with pain have access to the therapies they need. This is just one piece of the puzzle, but I believe it is an important measure that will help us address this crisis.

The mission of a conference committee is to iron out the differences between the House and Senate bills and compile a final package that will give public and private entities new and better tools to confront the opioid crisis and save lives. I hope we can do that here today. I look forward to working with both my House and Senate colleagues to send a bill to the President's desk and help address this crisis affecting families across the country.