

Congressman Lou Barletta Statement for the Record
Opioid Conference Committee
July 6, 2016

MR. CHAIRMAN. All you have to do is read the newspapers or watch television news to know that substance abuse is a problem that afflicts millions of Americans. This problem – and specifically the opioid epidemic – is something that I consistently hear about when I am back home in Pennsylvania. I am pleased to be a strong supporter of this comprehensive legislation that will attack the problem, and help bring so many lives back from the brink of disaster.

It was therefore a great honor to be named a conferee as the House and Senate worked together to craft bipartisan legislation to address our nation's growing opioid epidemic and prevent the heartbreaking instances of addiction and loss that have touched every American community. No American demographic is safe from the scourge of opioid addiction. It crosses party lines and it transcends Congressional district boundaries.

I am especially proud that the final legislation agreed upon by conferees from both chambers includes provisions I championed to help infants who are exposed to opioid before birth. Every 25 minutes in this country, a baby is born having already been exposed to drugs and suffering from opioid withdrawal. Children who are exposed to illegal substances before they're born are helpless in avoiding the pain and suffering caused by addiction, and so many infants enter this world without even a fighting chance. These children will pay the price for something they had absolutely no control over – something they were defenseless against.

My legislation, the Infant Plan of Safe Care Improvement Act, requires that states which receive federal funds for child protective services comply with federal law and enact certain guidelines for the welfare of children exposed to opioids. To me this is common sense – we need to ensure these children, mothers, and their families have the help they need and the care they deserve.

We often have political disagreements here in the halls of Congress, and those are the times that receive the most attention from the news media. I only wish that occasions like this one were as much, because this is where we come together and do what is right for all Americans.