

Senator Orrin G. Hatch
Statement
Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act
Conference Committee Meeting
July 6, 2016

I am glad to see that Senate and House are coming together to tackle the very important issue of opioid abuse, and I am pleased to serve as a conferee.

This is an epidemic that is devastating individuals, families, and communities across the country.

My home state of Utah has been particularly hard hit.

In 2014 alone, 289 Utahns died due to opioid abuse, which was more than half of all drug-overdose related deaths in the state for that year.

Through a series of bipartisan votes in both chambers, we are now poised to take action on a conference agreement that the American people want and deserve.

I was pleased to vote for the Senate CARA bill when it was reported out of the Judiciary Committee and when it passed by a vote of 94-1 on the Senate floor.

I commend Senator Portman, who worked for years alongside Senator Whitehouse, for his leadership on CARA. I must also recognize Senator Ayotte, as she has long been a true champion of this issue as well.

Speaking as the Chairman of the Finance Committee, I am pleased that this agreement provides Medicare with an important tool in the fight against opioid abuse.

The agreement allows Medicare Part D prescription drug plans to work with at-risk beneficiaries to identify one physician to prescribe opioids and one pharmacy to fill all the opioid prescriptions.

This is a common sense step that will improve patient care and reduced abuse; it also makes it more likely that beneficiaries with a problem get the help they need.

I commend Senator Toomey, who worked with Senator Brown, for his leadership on this issue.

The agreement also increases access to medication assisted treatment. I am proud of my past work on this issue and appreciate the improvement made by this agreement.

While many would have liked to see a more expansive policy change, it is critical that we pay for any increase in spending in our already unsustainable Medicare and Medicaid programs. This agreement enables us to stay true to that principle.

Let me conclude by saying that this is how the legislative process is supposed to work. Both chambers pass a bipartisan bill. A conference committee resolves the differences.

Let's pass this conference agreement to demonstrate that Congress works, and, more importantly, to deliver results for the American people.