

Conference Committee Opening Statement

Earlier this year, Southeastern Pennsylvania lost a young man, John Decker, who succumbed to his battle with addiction. As a teenager, John injured his knee playing basketball. His physician prescribed opioids to manage the pain after surgeries. John became addicted to the painkillers and moved to using heroin.

I introduced The John Thomas Decker Act with the goal of preventing injured youth and adolescent athletes from getting addicted to opioids and turning to heroin. The legislation, which is included as Section 104 of the conference report, directs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to study what information and resources are available to youth athletes and their families regarding the dangers of opioid use and abuse, non-opioid treatment options, and how to seek addiction treatment. The Department must report its findings and work with stakeholders to disseminate resources to students, parents, and those involved in treating a sports injury.

I also want to highlight that the conference report authorizes Medicare prescription drug plans to establish a drug management program. The policy ensures that seniors have appropriate access to medications while aiming to reduce misuse and abuse of prescriptions with a high potential for psychological or physical dependence.

I am pleased that my colleagues recognize that curbing the opioid and heroin epidemics will require a multi-faceted approach, which is reflected in the conference report before us today.