

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Member Rep. Annie Kuster

Oversight of Federal Efforts to Combat the Spread of Illicit Fentanyl

July 16, 2019

We have seen the opioid crisis evolve and take many different forms. No community in this country has been spared, but New England and New Hampshire in particular have been devastated by this crisis.

That is why it is imperative that we anticipate how the fentanyl crisis will continue to evolve. We need to get ahead of this ever-changing threat, so we are not caught flat-footed.

As I look at the witness panel, I am struck by their diverse missions. It is not every day that we have a hearing with the U.S. Postal Service and the DEA on the same witness panel.

We need a national strategy on our fentanyl response. And I don't just mean a white paper document or a task force report. I mean we need a coherent, practical plan for how we are going to beat this problem.

For example, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is supposed to formulate a strategy, bring all the agencies together, and see to it that the strategy is implemented effectively.

DEA, you are on the front lines and often develop important leads for targeting drugs. And FDA is suddenly in the middle of this fight because fentanyl is increasingly being mixed with other drugs, including counterfeit prescription drugs.

These are just a few of the issues we will explore today. If we are going to solve this problem, we need better cooperation across agencies, and we need to think differently than we have on past drug epidemics.

Finally, this hearing is just one piece of our oversight. This Subcommittee will stay on this issue and ensure progress is being made so that we are not back here again next year talking about the same problems.

I thank the witnesses for their service on this critical issue, and for being here today.

I yield back.