

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
“A Public Health Emergency: State Efforts to Curb the Opioid Crisis.”
January 14, 2020**

As Prepared for Delivery

Madam Chair, thank you for holding this critically important hearing.

For many years, the Energy and Commerce Committee—and this Subcommittee in particular—has been at the forefront of the Congressional effort to address the opioid crisis, as well as substance use disorder prevention and treatment more broadly.

This Committee has held hearings and conducted investigations on opioids and the opioid epidemic for nearly two decades – from bringing in Purdue Pharma to testify in 2001 about the abuse of OxyContin, to our bipartisan investigations last Congress into the rise of fentanyl, opioid manufacturing, opioid distribution, and the substance use disorder treatment industry.

These early hearings helped inform our legislative work including the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, the 21st Century Cures Act, which authorized the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis grants, and billions more in federal appropriations to boost programs that fight, treat, and stop substance abuse, and support access to mental health services. These efforts

culminated in the signing into law of the SUPPORT Act last Congress. In my home state of Oregon, we've seen the results, with a 3.1% reduction in opioid deaths based on the most recent statistics from the CDC.

I am pleased that we have continued to work together in this space, including by continuing our work on fentanyl, and with this important hearing today examining how the states are utilizing the funding and authorities provided by the Congress.

But there is so much more that we could do together. Earlier this year, Energy and Commerce Republicans published a Request for Information about the substance use disorder treatment industry. This RFI built off of the patient brokering investigation we conducted together last Congress. This investigation brought us to the question of what is good treatment – and conversely, what is bad treatment – which is the central question posed by the RFI. With the billions of dollars we are sending into the states for prevention and treatment, we need answers.

Just yesterday, E&C Republicans sent a letter to the three opioid manufacturers we began investigating together last Congress asking them to complete production to our requests. It is critical that we fully understand the

causes of the opioid epidemic in order to ensure that our solutions are the right ones.

We should also hold a comprehensive series of hearings to conduct oversight of the implementation of the SUPPORT Act. For example, relevant to today's hearing, the SUPPORT Act included the INFO Act, sponsored by Mr. Latta, which calls for the creation of a public and easily accessible electronic dashboard linking to all of the nationwide efforts and strategies to combat the opioid crisis. The INFO Act was designed to meet a specific need of local stakeholders who were telling us that despite Congress having devoted record numbers of federal dollars to combat the opioid crisis, they had trouble finding what resources were available and where they were. This provision is absolutely critical in helping those on the front lines of the opioid crisis and I am concerned about its slow implementation.

In addition to oversight of the SUPPORT Act, we also need to begin working on the next wave of legislation to address not only the opioid crisis, but substance use disorders more broadly. Most urgently, we need to reauthorize the fentanyl ban, which is set to expire in a matter of weeks. Reauthorizing the prohibitions on various forms of fentanyl has broad bipartisan support and we should be able to do this expeditiously.

Today's hearing is an important step to understand the impact that the federal grant dollars are having in the states, and I thank all of our witnesses for being a part of this conversation. I look forward to hearing not only about the successes in each of your states—and there are many—but also understanding the barriers that still exist, either in federal law or in the conditions of the federal dollars, and the ideas you have for how the Congress can continue to assist as you and your communities fight this battle on the front lines.