

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115
Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

November 24, 2015

Dr. Kenneth Katz
Lehigh Valley Health Network
Department of Emergency Medicine
Cedar Crest and I-78
Allentown, PA 18105

Dear Dr. Katz:

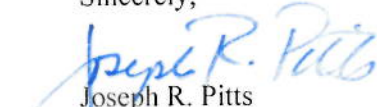
Thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Health on October 20, 2015, to testify at the hearing entitled "Examining Legislative Proposals to Combat Our Nation's Drug Abuse Crisis."

Pursuant to the Rules of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the hearing record remains open for ten business days to permit Members to submit additional questions for the record, which are attached. The format of your responses to these questions should be as follows: (1) the name of the Member whose question you are addressing, (2) the complete text of the question you are addressing in bold, and (3) your answer to that question in plain text.

To facilitate the printing of the hearing record, please respond to these questions with a transmittal letter by the close of business on December 8, 2015. Your responses should be mailed to Graham Pittman, Legislative Clerk, Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 and e-mailed in Word format to graham.pittman@mail.house.gov.

Thank you again for your time and effort preparing and delivering testimony before the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,


Joseph R. Pitts
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health

cc: The Honorable Gene Green, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health

Attachment

Attachment — Additional Questions for the Record

The Honorable Representative Gus Bilirakis

Dr. Katz, synthetic drug use has been a growing problem in Florida and has recently garnered the state significant media attention. Changing the statutory language to ban “chemically similar” substances or substances that “produce a similar clinical effect” will hopefully reduce the incentive to tweak formulas in an attempt to create drugs that are not technically illegal, which has been a root cause of this epidemic.

1. However, the drug known as flakka is already illegal in the United States, yet this has not prevented the widespread use of it in southern Florida. What steps can Congress and the public take to improve awareness of the dangers of these synthetic drugs and reduce access within our communities?

The Honorable Representative Frank Pallone, Jr.

The synthetic drug crisis has had tragic consequences for individuals who take these substances and for our health care system. H.R. 3537, the Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2015, would add over 300 chemicals to Schedule I and would lower the standard for whether a chemical is similar enough to an already-scheduled drug to become subject to the same schedule. While lowering this standard would make it easier for law enforcement to prosecute individuals who were trying to get around the law, concerns have been raised that it could lead to prosecution of people who were unaware they were using an illegal drug, such as young adults.

1. The intent of H.R. 3537, the Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2015, is for the penalties to fall onto the manufacturer, distributor, importer and seller, and not the end user. As drafted, does H.R. 3537 achieve this goal?
2. Further, will you please explain what more you believe can be done to prevent young adults from using synthetic drugs and other drugs that are susceptible to abuse?