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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2308

October 11, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess, MD
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Walden and Burgess and Ranking Members Pallone and Green,

Thank you for inviting me to submit testimony for today's House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health's Member Day.

Make no mistake about it – the abuse of opioids and other prescription drugs has become an epidemic and a crisis of major proportion in this country:

According to the latest figures from the Department of Health and Human Services, 33,000 people die every year from overdoses.

And 12.5 million people misuse and abuse opioids and prescription drugs every year.

The fact is - in just a very few generations, we've increased the life expectancy in this country from less than 50 years to nearly 80. And the Centers for Disease Control recently concluded that our life expectancy would be even higher but for this epidemic of prescription drug misuse.

With all that in mind – there is probably no more innovative or successful intervention program in the country than the community-based model being undertaken in Minnesota by CHI-St. Gabriel's & Morrison County Prescription Drug Abuse Project.

Their model – which at my invitation has been presented to Congressional staff twice now – has produced tremendous results by bringing together doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, law enforcement, home health and skilled nursing professionals and educators in the community-wide effort you will hear about today.

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The results speak for themselves.

In the community of Little Falls, the four participating pharmacies have experienced a 23 percent decrease in controlled substance prescriptions.

324 patients have tapered off controlled substances entirely, primarily through the use of suboxone.

And what that means is – 370,000 fewer controlled substances have entered the community since the program began. At about \$7 dollars per dose, that's a savings of about \$2.6 million dollars every year for patients in Morrison County.

And what's more, in the first 8 months of the program alone, pain went from the number one reason people were being admitted to the Emergency Room – to not even in the top 20.

The fact is, doctors are not only managing pain better, but they are doing it with many new and effective options that don't include long term use of narcotics.

This program has become a model for our entire Nation, and I wanted to share it with the Committee today for their awareness and examination.

In closing, thank you for convening this hearing today – and helping us all move forward to put an end to this crisis that is affecting so many lives and families and communities.

Sincerely,



Richard M. Nolan
Member of Congress