

Testimony by Representative G. K. Butterfield (NC-01)
Subcommittee on Health Hearing
House Energy and Commerce Committee
“Member Day: Testimony and Proposals on the Opioid Crisis”
October 11, 2017

Chairman Burgess, thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today about the state of the opioid epidemic in North Carolina.

I credit my friend and colleague Mary Bono Mack with bringing this important topic to the forefront of this Committee’s work to protect public health. As Ranking Member of the Subcommittee previously known as Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade, I worked closely with Representative Bono Mack to ensure the supply chain for potentially dangerous narcotics is airtight.

Just last year, I worked with many of my colleagues in this room on the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act that was passed into law. That bill included roughly twenty different legislative proposals to help slow the opioid epidemic. As part of the 21st Century Cures Act, this Committee approved \$500 million in supplemental funding to address opioid abuse.

Despite the investments and attention from Congress, we are still feeling the opioid crisis close to home in North Carolina. During the August work period, I saw the effects of the epidemic on my community in Wilson, North Carolina.

Just in August alone, there were two deaths because of opioid abuse in Wilson. According to reports in The Wilson Times, medics in Wilson County administered Naloxone in response to opioid crises 28 times by mid-August, when they usually administer the treatment 30 times per quarter. According to Chris Parker with Wilson County Emergency Medical Services, “there is a definite increase in opiate use in Wilson County.”

North Carolina has a real problem on its hands. By July of this year, there were more than 500 opioid diagnoses for emergency department visits, up from 410 at the same point in 2016.

Clearly, the Administration is not taking this situation seriously. The budget offered by the Trump Administration cuts HHS by 16 percent, the CDC by 17 percent, and that National Institutes of Health by 19 percent. I am also very concerned about the proposals to gut the Medicaid program that we have considered in this very Committee. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that nearly 100,000 people with an opioid use disorder have gained coverage through Medicaid Expansion under the ACA.

Congress must do all it can to help stop this epidemic from devastating more lives, families, and communities. Congress should provide certainty in funding to combat this epidemic, which is why I am original cosponsor of H.R. 3495, the Opioid and Heroin Abuse Crisis Investment Act of 2017, that was introduced by my friend Ben Ray Luján. We must also protect existing funding for research and opioid use disorder coverage, provide tools to communities to address this epidemic, and reduce stigma for those needing treatment.

I ask unanimous consent to submit two articles from The Wilson Times for the record. I yield back.