

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

Chairman Burgess, Ranking Member Green, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today to share my thoughts on the opioid crisis.

This year alone, there have been more than 100 reported overdose deaths in my district. That number would be much higher if it weren't for the 574 Naloxone saves reported by our local hospitals and the NYPD.

Before I came to Congress, I served as District of Attorney of Richmond County, which comprises Staten Island, NY. Based on that experience, my time in Congress, and input from local experts like the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness, I support a three-tiered approach that addresses education, treatment, and enforcement.

Targeted education campaigns can teach the next generation of potential users about the dangers of substance abuse, including particularly sinister compounds like fentanyl.

Treatment is of course crucial. We've learned that recovery is a cycle and relapses will happen. Our policies should reflect that reality. Our society now understands that addiction is a medical illness and not a criminal act. Let's help the addicted, not punish them. To that end, consistently appropriating grants for local treatment programs is the most effective way to help end the cycle of addiction from the federal level.

Lastly, we can't ignore the importance of enforcement, particularly against traffickers. My *Comprehensive Fentanyl Control Act* would ban pill presses that traffickers use to create their deadly, fentanyl-laced cocktails. It would also update sentencing guidelines to reflect the fact that a few grains of rice worth of fentanyl can kill.

I firmly believe that experts on the ground are best equipped to tailor their approaches to meet their community's needs. It's our job as legislators to provide them with the resources necessary to accomplish their mission. Legislation like the *21st Century Cures Act* and the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act* – which I championed to constituents back in my district – are exactly the right approach.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my thoughts. I look forward to working with the Subcommittee to continue addressing this national crisis.