

STATEMENT OF
REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN FITZPATRICK OF PENNSYLVANIA'S EIGHTH DISTRICT
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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I would like to start off by thanking Chairman Burgess, Ranking Member Green, and members of the Subcommittee on Health for holding this hearing.

Mr. Chairman, drug overdoses involving prescription opioids and heroin have nearly quadrupled since 1999 and are now the leading cause of accidental death. Substance abuse costs our country over \$600 billion annually. In my home state of Pennsylvania, drug-related deaths and opioid addiction rates were among the highest in the country. Within a one year, Pennsylvania's opioid-related deaths rose 20 percent while my district's increased by 50 percent.

This epidemic is costing us both resources and precious lives.

Carlos Castellanos of Falls Township, Bucks County always loved sharing his talents and love of music by playing the guitar and drums at school and for local church groups.

However, like so many around the nation, Carlos got involved with drugs during his time in school and even spent some time in jail. But, with the strength and support of his family, he began receiving treatment and his life improved. He helped others by volunteering at a recovery house and he brought people suffering in similar situations to treatment programs.

In early December, Carlos walked his mother, Pamela, down the aisle for her wedding. He was getting ready to go back to school, he had a steady job, and a girlfriend. It would seem to many that Carlos' battle with addiction was heading in the right direction – a needed point of hope in a war that's caused so much devastation.

Then, on December 23rd, just days before Christmas, two police detectives showed up at Pamela's door to tell her the devastating news that no mother can prepare for: Carlos had overdosed on a drug laced with fentanyl and was unable to be saved.

Mr. Chairman, Carlos' life – and his death – cast a bright light on the fact that addiction is nothing short of a chronic disease.

I share this story with members of this chamber because we must realize that we have to treat the whole person, not just the addiction. We must focus on the underlying issues driving people to seek opioids, while increasing the accessibility and affordability for prevention, education, treatment, and recovery of this disease. The so-called Institutions for Mental Diseases – or IMD – exclusion is a long-standing policy that prohibits the federal Medicaid matching funds to states for services rendered to Medicaid enrollees who suffer from substance use disorder and mental health treatment.

Some states – including my home state of Pennsylvania - have used an “in lieu of services” provision allowing for inpatient treatment, but with limitations on patient population, facility size, and length of stay. These limitations disproportionately affect those under Medicaid – blocking access to treatment for people who need inpatient treatment for addiction including some of society’s most vulnerable.

That is why I introduced bipartisan legislation that eliminates the IMD exclusion for substance use disorder and help states expand access to inpatient addiction services for Medicaid enrollees in a fiscally responsible manner while not intruding on their flexibility to implement care.

The *Road to Recovery Act* addresses real-world concerns expressed by local lawmakers, community leaders and healthcare professionals in my district who endeavor to tackle this epidemic each day.

I urge my colleagues to learn more about this issue and support this bipartisan bill, but also to recommit ourselves to addressing the addiction crisis and fighting for those who suffer.

I yield back.