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Member Day: Testimony and Proposals on the Opioid Crisis
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Thank you, Chairman Burgess, Ranking Member Green and members of the subcommittee, for giving me the opportunity to discuss the most challenging public health crisis of our time. States and communities across this country have been dealing with the ravages of opioid and drug addiction. This is not a rural or urban problem, it is a crisis that has hit cities and small towns alike.

West Virginia has been ground zero for the opioid epidemic. The statistics speak for themselves. West Virginia has the highest overdose death rate, we have the highest rate of newborns exposed to opioids and other drugs known as Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome or NAS, and the lowest workforce participation rate.

But from this tragic epidemic has come an exceptional response from communities across my home state. Communities have come together to find solutions and they are working to get their communities healthy again.

One of the most shining examples is Lily's Place, a unique stand-alone facility that specializes in treating newborns suffering from NAS in a clinically appropriate setting. I was proud to have worked with two NICU nurses to start Lily's Place after they had seen a dramatic rise in newborns with NAS at the local hospital.

Lily's Place has brought national attention to West Virginia solutions, being featured in a number of news stories. Just yesterday, First Lady, Melania Trump, visited Lily's Place in West Virginia to talk with caregivers helping the most vulnerable in our society, newborns suffering from NAS.

Lily's Place provides a perfect environment for newborns suffering from NAS, with a low lit, low stimulus environment with doctors and nurses providing care. Lily's Place has become a model for its ability to treat newborns, and Lily's Place includes the mothers and families in the healing process.

Last year with the tireless work of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Congress passed and the President signed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act or CARA. I was honored to have my legislation, the Nurturing and Supporting Healthy Babies Act included in the package of bills. This legislation required the GAO to take a close look at the different care models for NAS and how NAS is covered by Medicaid. I thank the members of this committee for working with me to further our understanding of how best to take care of newborns with NAS.

The GAO report released last week, had important information and a number of key findings in it. Part of what we have learned from the GAO report is that non-hospital settings are sometimes a better alternative to the NICU for the care that NAS newborns need. The report identified and took a close look at different care models and how the best practices at non-hospital settings can actually reduce costs of care.

I have sponsored legislation, the CRIB Act, with Congressman Mike Turner which makes sure that these non-hospital settings are recognized by Medicaid to remove this barrier to care for NAS newborns. This legislation would clear the confusion at CMS on how to certify these facilities and as to what a non-hospital NAS treatment center is.

The GAO report also highlighted that the Department of Health and Human Services has a number of recommendations they developed but HHS does not have a clear strategy or timeline for implementing these recommendations. I am working on legislation to make sure HHS develops a clear timeline and begins implementing a number of these recommendations. This legislation will give the needed push to HHS so we can help the newborns that are most impacted by the opioid epidemic start their lives happy and healthy.

We have a unique opportunity to continue the strong bipartisan work on addressing the opioid epidemic and these two pieces of legislation can continue this effort. I look forward to working with the Committee to bring these two pieces of legislation to the House floor and send them to the President's desk.

Caring for the most vulnerable impacted by the opioid crisis is a truly noble cause and one that we can all come together to support.