

Thank you Chairman Burgess for organizing this conversation today.

The Energy and Commerce Committee has done a lot right in the fight against drug addiction. Last year's landmark legislation set up lanes for success but it is going to be up to this Committee to make sure the Administration, the respective agencies and all stakeholders continue this effort to implement the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 and do all we can for those in need. I think today's member day demonstrates we are committed to doing that.

The opioid crisis is devastating families and communities across the Garden State. In 2015, New Jersey's heroin death rate was two-and-one-half times the skyrocketing U.S. rate. We are making progress with CARA's implementation but there is much more work to be done. Too often we are hearing about another life cut short from the scourge of drug addiction. This is not just a New Jersey problem, but an epidemic facing the entire country. We need to be working together and empowering the groups and organizations that are succeeding in turning the tide against drug abuse.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of one of my constituents, Basking Ridge resident Clodette Sabatelle. Clodette has done critical work and has made a difference in the lives of those suffering from drug addiction. Her advocacy group, Community in Crisis, helps empower and equip the loved ones of those in pain. None of the progress we have made so far in this fight against drug addiction and opioid abuse would have been possible without the work of people like Clodette and organizations like Community in Crisis. Their efforts equipped Congress to act and helped craft and champion the CARA legislation.

I worked closely with Clodette on the issue of over prescription. In 2012, health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions to people for opioids. The CARA provisions I authored address that issue by reforming and improving the medical drug approval and label process within the federal Food and Drug Administration. For the first time, Congress has required the agency to work closely with expert advisory committees before making critical product approval and labeling decisions and to make recommendations regarding education programs for prescribers of extended-release and long-acting opioids. CARA also encourages the development and approval of opioids with abuse-deterrent properties.

We also have to make sure resources such as the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grants administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration continue to give states the tools they need to experiment and test best practices. New Jersey recently secured a \$13 million dollar federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to prioritize five specific strategies: strengthening public health surveillance, advancing the practice of pain

management, improving access to treatment and recovery services, targeting availability and distribution of overdose-reversing drugs and supporting cutting-edge research.

The Drug-Free Communities Support Program the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy also recently awarded Community in Crisis and two other very able organizations, Hunterdon Prevention Resource and Empower Somerset, each with a \$125,000 grant to assist addressing the problem of opioid and heroin abuse, provide education and implement prevention measures. Community in Crisis, Hunterdon Prevention Resource and Empower Somerset are great partners in connecting people with the resources and support they need. These investments are not only the right thing to do, but help lessen the significant strain on law enforcement resources. I commend each group on its important work.

Mr. Chairman, I stand ready to work with you and colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue this work. Thank you for calling this hearing today.