

"First of all, Dr. Burgess thank you, and Mr. Green thank you, you're taking time to focus attention and demonstrate the urgency of this challenge. Second, this so affects us all, I mean it's heartbreaking, and it doesn't matter if it is a red district or a blue district, it doesn't matter what your view is on the size and scope of government. This is hurting people in your district Dr. Burgess and Mr. Green, and in my district and my colleague's here.

In Vermont, our governor dedicated his entire state of the state address to this epidemic in 2014, and I remember at that time many of my colleagues asked the question 'Peter, isn't this going to do bad things for the reputation of Vermont?' but then acknowledged that what he was saying was true in their own state, in their own districts. So you focusing attention on it Mr. Chairman, thank you, that is step number one.

I can give you some statistics in Vermont, they would be very similar to Mr. Johnson. I mean our prescription drug problems with individuals increased from 2477 in 2012 by 80%, heroin went from 913 in 2012 and increased to 3488, a 380% increase. Every one of those stories is a story of family heartache. I mean, I got a letter from a mom whose 27 year-old son became addicted to heroin, and just the story about him being homeless, him going from being a full time working person to being out on the street, her having to call her daughters saying that their brother may soon be dead. All of that is real and all too vivid. So this is an enormous challenge.

Our job in Congress is to come up with some policies that will help people help themselves. And I'd like to make a few suggestions of things that we need to do. Number one, we do have to have funding. We have to have full funding for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. And we have got to find the money to in order allow our communities to do that work. Two, we have to have more research into alternative treatment. I'm working with Mr. McKinley to try to get the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act to find better alternatives to treat pain. Three, let's allow for partial filling of opioid prescriptions. Many of us have signed letters that would allow that to happen. Four, let's support the recent action by commissioner Gottlieb. He's done some good things. He is trying to get immediate release opioid manufacturers to follow a more stringent set of REMS requirements, which includes training doctors to safely prescribe these drugs. So, this hearing is tremendous, focusing attention. The next step is to put this into legislative action."