

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Gene Green**  
**March 21, 2018**

*Combating the Opioid Crisis: Prevention and Public Health Solutions*

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing on the opioid crisis and public health solutions.

I thank our witnesses with the Department of Health and Human Services and engaged stakeholders for joining us today on this snowy morning.

One-hundred fifteen (115) Americans die from overdosing on opioids every day. The misuse of, and addiction, to opioids – including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids like fentanyl – is a serious national crisis that affects public health, as well as the social and economic welfare of communities throughout America.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total “economic burden” of prescription opioid misuse in the United States is \$78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement.

It is imperative that Congress and our federal public health agencies advance policies that will help our fellow Americans struggling with opioid addiction and prevent abuse and misuse from happening in the first place.

One of the bills I am working on, currently a discussion draft, would authorize the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to consider the potential for misuse and abuse when assessing the risks and benefits of controlled substances for purposes of approval.

It is important that as our committee crafts legislation on the opioid crisis, we give FDA clear authority to consider potential misuse and abuse of a product when the risks outweigh the benefits.

I hope to hear from our panelists today how we can best tailor my proposal that will clarify FDA authority while ensuring that it is targeting the controlled substances that are fueling the opioid crisis.

The second bill I am working on, with Congressman Guthrie, Lujan and Bucshon, is the Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Centers Act, H.R. 5327. This bill creates a grant program administered through the Department of Health and Human Services to fund designated centers

where individuals can obtain comprehensive patient-centered care for the treatment of opioid addiction and other substance use disorders.

Under the Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Centers Act, each grantee would be required to provide, either directly or through agreement with other entities, a set range of coordinated evidence-based treatment and recovery services.

Grantees would also be required to monitor and report on the effectiveness of these programs as well as provide outreach to their communities on the services they are providing.

I've been a longtime proponent of increasing access to health care in our communities. It was surprising to me to learn how confusing and limited the options are for patients with substance use disorder. I'm hoping this piece of legislation will help transform our treatment system and help patients more easily navigate their options for care.

I look forward to asking questions of our panelists as to how to make sure the purpose of this bill is carried out in the most effective way.

While our committee is examining how best to combat opioid abuse, I need to remind my colleagues on the critical importance of ensuring affordable health care coverage with essential benefits as part of the solution to this crisis.

We cannot help American struggling with opioid abuse if they do not have health coverage, or have coverage that does not provide the full range of essential health services that are supposed to be guaranteed under the Affordable Care Act.

I would like to share some concerns before I conclude. Many Members of our committee, including myself, are concerned about the number of bills we are considering during our two-day hearing.

While we all agree on the magnitude of the opioid crisis and the importance of concrete congressional action, I am concerned that we will only be able to give brief attention to many of the bills before us today and tomorrow due to the number of bills we are considering, 25 in total.

While many of bills are non-controversial and bipartisan, there are bills that need to be improved before they are ready for consideration before the full House of Representatives. I hope the Chairman will commit to work with us on our concerns before bringing these bills to a markup.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield the remainder of my time.