



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 21, 2018

CONTACT
[CJ Young](#) – (202) 225-5735

Pallone’s Opening Remarks at a Legislative Hearing on Combatting the Opioid Epidemic

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Health hearing on “Combatting the Opioid Crisis: Prevention and Public Health Solutions.”*

Today we continue a series of hearings to address the complex opioid abuse crisis that is devastating lives across the country. While we have worked together to pass CARA and the 21st Century Cures Act, more must be done. That is why I’m pleased that Congress agreed to provide a total of \$6 billion in additional funding for efforts to respond to the epidemic for fiscal years 2018 and 2019. Without this funding commitment, many of the laws we’ve passed and the bills being discussed during this hearing are nothing more than empty words.

Over the next two days, we have a lot of bills to consider, and I hope we can have a thorough conversation about all of them. However, I’m concerned that it will be difficult to properly address all of the bills since there are so many. Going forward, it would be nice if the Republican Majority scheduled multiple hearings so that we have the time to fully evaluate the proposed solutions.

The bills we will consider during the next two days are diverse and span multiple disciplines, and that’s essential because there is no single solution to the opioid crisis. No single individual, group, field of study, or agency can solve this problem alone, everyone must do their part.

One of the major ways we can impact the prevalence of opioids available for abuse is to limit the importation of synthetic opioids that have infiltrated our international mailing facilities. That is why I have introduced a bill, the SCREEN ACT, to expand FDA’s authority to crack down on the counterfeit drugs entering the country. Currently, FDA has limited authority to act on parcels with mislabeled, unlabeled, or counterfeit drug products. This bill will provide greater oversight of packages in International Mail Facilities, allow the FDA to refuse importation or destroy illegal drugs being shipped into the country, and recall and prevent

distribution of products that pose a danger to public health. Importantly, it will also authorize resources for FDA to expand capacity to meet this challenge.

It's unfortunate that the Chairman chose not to notice this bill for today's hearing since I've been working on this issue for years. I hope that we can still consider this bill moving forward.

We're also reviewing other important bills such as H.R. 3692, the Addiction Treatment Access Improvement Act of 2017, which will increase the number of providers that can treat patients through the DATA 2000 waiver. H.R. 5140, the Tribal Addiction and Recovery Act, will provide funding to tribes and tribal organizations for substance use disorder prevention and treatment efforts in Indian Country. And a discussion draft that would enhance and improve State-run Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs – known as NASPER.

I'm not able to speak on every bill in such a short amount of time. But I did want to highlight the concerns I have with one of the bills under discussion today. H.R. 3545, the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act could dangerously erect a barrier to patients seeking and remaining in treatment and therefore harm our efforts to respond to this crisis. It would be nice if we could eliminate discrimination for good in this country by simply passing a law that makes discrimination illegal, but unfortunately that simply isn't the case. Therefore I do not think the additions to the underlying text of the bill cures the issue of the risk of stigma, discrimination, and negative health and life outcomes that could result from a roll back of regulations that protect a patients' privacy.

I look forward to discussing each of the bills during this and future hearings and continuing to work towards finding solutions to the opioid crisis.
I yield back.

###

democrats-energycommerce.house.gov | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#)