

**Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Health Subcommittee Hearing**  
**February 1, 2023**  
**Opening Statement**  
*As Prepared for Delivery*

**INTRO**

Welcome to our legislative hearing titled, “Lives Worth Living: Addressing the Fentanyl Crisis, Protecting Critical Lifelines, and Combatting Discrimination Against Those with Disabilities.”

We will hear from a diverse panel on how we can advance solutions that will help people in need of hope and healing in our communities.

**FRS / HALT / BLOCK**

Last month, Energy & Commerce Republicans held a roundtable on the fentanyl crisis.

We heard from Deb and Ray Cullen who lost their son, Zach.

They told us they will never forget the moment the police showed up to their door asking if they were Zach’s parents.

He was just 9 days past his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday when he was targeted and poisoned by a drug dealer.

Today, we’ll hear from Molly Cain from my hometown of Spokane, Washington.

She lost her son Carson to a fentanyl poisoning when he was also 23 years old.

Deb, Ray, and Molly have experienced immeasurable pain from losing their children...

... and they deserve justice.

That is why Reps. Griffith and Latta are leading on the HALT Fentanyl Act.

This bill would permanently place fentanyl-related substances into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act... and make sure our law enforcement can keep these weapons-grade poisons off our streets.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration is proposing to treat these deadly poisons differently from fentanyl and other currently scheduled fentanyl related substances.

The administration supports exempting the entire class from mandatory minimums that are typically imposed upon drug traffickers, preventing law enforcement from stopping those who bring deadly substances into our communities.

If the temporary legislation were to expire, it would mean the **criminals** who killed people like Zach and Carson could keep trafficking these lethal substances with little consequences. So let's make it permanent.

I am hopeful that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will work with us to punish those who make, import, and distribute these poisons to our children.

I also want to recognize Rep. Harshbarger's leadership in introducing the Block, Report, And Suspend Suspicious Shipments Act.

The opioid epidemic is fueled, in part, by suspiciously large shipments of pain medication being delivered across the country – particularly in places like Tennessee and West Virginia.

This bill would help stop this practice and save lives by requiring drug manufacturers and distributors that discover a suspicious order for controlled substances to halt the order and report the information to DEA.

**988**

Additionally, just last month, we learned about a cyber-attack on the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

This lifeline is a network of local crisis centers that provides emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

It's a critical tool that was established by the bipartisan work of this Committee, and we must ensure that it is protected from future cyber threats.

Rep. Obernolte's 9-8-8 Lifeline Cybersecurity Responsibility Act would do just that – it requires coordination and reporting to improve cybersecurity protections for the 988 lifeline.

## **QALY**

Finally, we will discuss why we must take action to protect people with disabilities with the Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act.

It would ban Quality Adjusted Life Years or QALYs that discriminate against people with disabilities and patients with debilitating or life-threatening health conditions.

QALYs undervalue treatments for patients who have shorter life spans than others.

In countries with QALY's, the most vulnerable get pushed to the back of the line for treatment...

.... People like those with cystic fibrosis, ALS, and people like my son with Down syndrome.

The government says their lives don't matter. They aren't valuable enough.

In America—where we have led the world in amazing medical breakthroughs and innovation—we must ban QALY's and strongly affirm that every life is worth living.

It is my sincere hope we can move forward on this bill in a bipartisan way.

Families need hope—not a government that has power over life and death.

## **CLOSING**

There is inherent dignity in every human life.

That is what we are coming together around today in our first legislative hearing this Congress...

... and I look forward to learning more today on how we can work together to promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

Thank you and I yield back.