

**Opening Statement for the Honorable Brett Guthrie**  
**Subcommittee on Health Markup**  
**March 8, 2023**

Today, the Health Subcommittee will hold its first subcommittee markup of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. The American people delivered a strong message to Congress in November of last year and elected Republicans to lead the House. Americans wanted safer streets, secure borders, and a government that is accountable to them.

We have already delivered on a few of these promises by voting to end the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and voting to end the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' COVID-19 vaccine mandate on our health care heroes to name a couple.

Today, we're one step closer to delivering on more promises that will protect our children, secure our borders, and uphold the dignity of human life. The legislation before us today will help ensure Americans live longer, healthier lives and will bring us one step closer to ensuring parents can sleep easier at night knowing that we are cracking down on

illicit fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances that are threatening the lives of tens of thousands of Americans.

Over the past two years, we have seen historic rises in illicit fentanyl seizures at our southern border and sadly, record high fentanyl poisonings and drug overdoses. Too many Americans have lost their lives due to drug overdose, largely driven by synthetic opioids like illicit fentanyl. In my home state of Kentucky, illicit fentanyl contributed to over 70% of all overdose deaths in the Commonwealth in 2021, which saw a 14% increase in drug overdoses between 2020 and 2021.

That's why it is important to me to support the HALT Fentanyl Act that is before us today. This bill was introduced by my colleagues Representatives Griffith and Latta and would permanently schedule fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs. It is long past due for this legislation to become law and finally remove the incentive for criminals to create new fentanyl related substances. We can't keep kicking the can. We should have a permanent solution to address the flow of fentanyl related substances coming into our communities.

Further lack of permanent action only emboldens those trafficking these toxins into our communities and allows criminals to continue tearing our communities apart.

The HALT Fentanyl Act isn't just the only solution to address the unprecedented supply of these drugs flooding our streets. Ms. Lesko's legislation, the Securing the Border for Public Health Act, would expand current Title 42 authority to allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services, after consultation with the Attorney General, to stop persons and property from entry into the United States to prevent the flow of certain controlled substances and protect our nation's public health. This bill will help prevent dangerous, illicit drugs from being trafficked into our communities.

To be clear, votes for these bills are not votes to reform our nation's immigration laws. These are votes to strengthen our public health security and continue our work to combat the overdose crisis and save lives.

We must also take steps to ensure we're working to stem the tide of this crisis through legal channels and ensure there isn't an oversupply of prescription opioids on our streets. That is why I strongly support Representative Harshbarger's legislation, H.R. 501, Block, Report, and Suspend Suspicious Shipments Act, which would require drug manufacturers and distributors to report all suspicious orders of controlled substances to the Drug Enforcement Agency and require these entities to decline to fill such orders. Fighting the overdose epidemic necessitates a multipronged approach and a strong partnership between the public and private sectors, which this legislation accomplishes.

The next piece of legislation before us today, H.R. 498, the 9-8-8 Lifeline Cybersecurity Responsibility Act, will address cybersecurity vulnerabilities within the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline system to help ensure individuals in emotional distress or suicidal crisis continue to have access to this life-saving resource without disruption. I thank Representative Obernolte for leading this important bill and urge its immediate passage.

Last, is Chair Rodgers' H.R. 485, the Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act of 2023, which would permanently ban the use of Quality Adjusted Life Years in all federal health programs. These discriminatory measures pick winners and losers by valuing some lives more than others and reduce access to potentially life-saving treatments for vulnerable populations, like those living with disabilities. I urge the swift passage of this important legislation.

Thank you, and I yield back.