

Opening Statement for the Honorable Earl L. “Buddy” Carter

As Prepared for Delivery

“Combatting Existing and Emerging Illicit Drug Threats.”

February 6, 2024

As we gavel in the first Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health hearing, American families across the country continue to suffer from failures of the Biden-Harris Administration’s disastrous four years and its inability to address one of the greatest public health threats of our lifetimes: the illicit drugs pouring over our borders.

Under the previous Administration, the United States experienced a historic rise of drug overdoses and poisonings, driven by an increased supply of synthetic opioids, such as illicit fentanyl and its analogs.

Last fiscal year, Customs and Border Protection confiscated over 21,000 pounds of fentanyl at our borders. That is enough fentanyl to kill every American several times over. And that’s just the drugs we know about.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, we saw rates of overdose and poisoning deaths skyrocket, peaking at nearly 108,000 in 2023,

driven by the surge of fentanyl coming across our borders. Illicit fentanyl overdoses are now the number one cause of death among adults 18 to 45. Each year, more Americans are dying from illicit fentanyl than the number of American lives lost during the Vietnam War.

However, I believe we have a great opportunity to make significant and sustainable progress in combating this crisis. To do so we must continue to expand the availability of overdose reversal treatments like naloxone, removing the stigma associated with carrying it and making it as common as a defibrillator. Every school in America should have access to naloxone.

We must secure our borders to stop the scourge of illegal drugs, especially poisons like illicit fentanyl. President Trump has already made progress to address the fentanyl crisis by forcing Mexico and Canada to come to the negotiating table. With President Trump's leadership, we must continue to crack down on China, Mexico, and anyone who smuggles fentanyl and other synthetic drugs across our borders with the sole intention of preying on Americans.

Additionally, this Committee is already taking action to help keep

illicit fentanyl out of our communities and save lives. Later today the House will vote on a bill developed by this Committee, the Halt All Lethal Trafficking of Fentanyl Act, which will take the critical step of permanently scheduling all fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs under the Controlled Services Act.

These tools and solutions address today's problem. But, like the evolution of the opioid crisis from the over prescribing of oxycontin to today's scourge of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, we must prepare for what's next. In this hearing we'll hear from our witnesses not just on the illicit drugs threatening our communities today but potential new threats that if left unaddressed will be driving this crisis tomorrow.

I look forward to hearing that testimony and working alongside my colleagues on addressing these issues.

Thank you, and I yield back.