

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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MEMORANDUM

June 14, 2019

To: Members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform

Fr: Majority Staff

Re: Hearing on “Medical Experts: Inadequate Federal Approach to Opioid Treatment and the Need to Expand Care”

On Wednesday, June 19, 2019, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Committee will hear testimony from medical experts, including providers and local public health officials, regarding the inadequacy of the current federal approach to the opioid crisis and the need for increased evidence-based treatment for substance use disorder.

I. BACKGROUND

The opioid epidemic is the greatest public health crisis the United States has faced in recent history. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): “In 2017, there were 70,237 drug overdose deaths in the United States”—the highest rate of drug overdose deaths ever observed in the United States.¹

Opioids were the leading cause of drug overdose deaths in 2017—accounting for 47,600 overdose deaths (approximately 67% of all drug overdose deaths that year). Overdose deaths attributable to synthetic opioids like fentanyl “increased 45% from 6.2 per 100,000 in 2016 to 9.0 in 2017.”² According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): “In 2017, an estimated 11.4 million people misused opioids in the past year, including 11.1 million pain reliever misusers and 886,000 heroin users.”³

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 1999-2017* (Nov. 2018) (online at www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db329-h.pdf).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Drug Overdose Deaths* (online at www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html) (accessed on June 12, 2019).

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (Sept. 2018) (online at www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2017-nsduh-annual-national-report).

According to a recent consensus study report issued by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: "Opioid use disorder is a treatable chronic brain disease." The National Academies found that: "Despite the preponderance of evidence that medications to treat OUD [opioid use disorder] are safe and effective, they remain highly underused in the United States."⁴ A study drawing on data from the NSDUH found that: "In 2016, about 19.9 million adults needed substance use treatment in the past year, representing 8.1 percent of adults," but "of the 19.9 million adults needing substance use treatment, 10.8 percent received specialty treatment (2.1 million)."⁵

The National Academies study report warned that the consequences of opioid use disorder were extensive and "proliferating in the form of health care costs, loss of productivity, and criminal involvement."⁶

II. HEARING PURPOSE

The hearing will examine: (1) why so many patients and families in need of treatment are unable to obtain it; (2) whether the responses to date from the Executive Branch and Congress have been adequate to address this generational crisis; and (3) H.R. 2569, the Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency (CARE) Act, which is intended to increase access to evidence-based treatment and wraparound services critical to supporting sustained recovery.

III. WITNESSES

Susan R. Bailey, M.D.

President-elect
American Medical Association

Yngvild K. Olsen, M.D., MPH, DFASAM

Vice President, American Society of Addiction Medicine
Medical Director, Institutes for Behavior Resources Inc./REACH Health Services in
Baltimore

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer/Executive Vice President
American Psychological Association

⁴ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Save Lives* (2019) (online at www.nap.edu/catalog/25310/medications-for-opioid-use-disorder-save-lives).

⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Receipt of Services for Substance and Mental Health Issues among Adults: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (online at www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DR-FFR2-2016/NSDUH-DR-FFR2-2016.htm) (accessed June 12, 2019).

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Save Lives* (2019) (online at www.nap.edu/catalog/25310/medications-for-opioid-use-disorder-save-lives).

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Minority Witness TBD

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