

**Hearing Statement**  
**Health Subcommittee Chairman Michael C. Burgess, M.D.**  
**October 25, 2017**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing today.

I also appreciate all of the witnesses here for coming before our Committee and sharing their agency's efforts to fight the opioid crisis at the federal level.

The Health Subcommittee recently heard from more than 50 members on how the opioid epidemic is affecting their communities. The opioid crisis has touched every corner of American society – no one is immune from this heartbreaking problem. Just this month, our North Texas community lost a young man in his mid-20s from a suspected overdose. This young man, who was the son of one of my daughter's closest friends, had his whole life ahead of him. Too many American families have been devastated by this epidemic. The statistics on this issue are shocking, particularly as we consider that 91 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose, and in 2016 alone, drug overdoses claimed more American lives than the entire Vietnam War.

The debate around pain medication is not a new issue for our Committee. In fact, one of the first Energy and Commerce Committee hearings I participated in more than a decade ago focused on physicians' treatment of pain. However, at the time, we were concerned that physicians were not treating pain adequately. Today, we are hearing about a much different situation.

As we consider solutions critical to stemming the opioid crisis, we must strike a careful balance before casting blame. It bothers me when I hear doctors placed at fault for this epidemic. **Physicians are our allies, not our adversaries, in this battle against the opioid epidemic.** In fact, a caring doctor on the front line can do more to stem this problem than any federal government action.

Now, I have a few questions for our witnesses.