

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
“Examining Advertising and Marketing Practices within the Substance Use  
Treatment Industry”  
July 24, 2018**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. Today’s hearing follows up on a year-long bipartisan investigation into patient brokering and the fraud and abuse within the substance use disorder treatment industry.

Beginning in April 2014, this subcommittee commenced a comprehensive examination into the causes of the opioid epidemic, the impact it’s had on Americans, and explored possible solutions to enable greater access to effective, evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders.

The House recently passed H.R. 6, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, which includes 70 provisions - largely from this committee - that seek to address a number of issues within the opioid crisis. But our work here is not done and the committee continues to conduct oversight because our country is far from seeing the end of the opioid epidemic and its tragic effects.

In December, this subcommittee held a hearing examining patient brokering and addiction treatment fraud where concerns were raised about deceptive and sometimes predatory advertising and marketing practices within the treatment industry.

In addition, we've read news reports, spoken to treatment facilities, doctors, associations, and stakeholders within the industry, but most importantly, we've heard from individuals and their loved ones who have faced some of these aggressive and deceptive advertising practices. In my district in Oregon, a father named Mike told me about the troubling experience he had when his son was seeking treatment for addiction. The recovery center was located in another state and seemed more interested in cashing a check rather than caring for his son.

As the committee dove deeper into the advertising and marketing practices within this industry we found a Pandora's box of online advertisements, websites, phone numbers, lead generators, call centers, and television commercials. In some cases, an individual or company may own dozens and dozens of websites, and some of these websites contain different 1-800 numbers, despite all being owned by the same person or all leading to the same treatment company.

Some websites and television commercials use forceful language, such as: "Call now," "don't wait any longer," "get the help you need," "talk to someone who cares," "end your addiction now," or "for immediate treatment help." One individual the committee spoke with shared that the person on the other end of the phone went as far to say, "if you don't get your kid here now, your kid will die."

Further, some of the websites and advertisements purport to offer the "best" treatment in the country or claim high success rates to lure patients to their

facilities. This all sounds great, but we don't know what those statements are based on. For example, does that mean someone successfully enrolled in treatment, completed treatment, that they are still maintaining their sobriety one year later? What does success mean and how do you measure it? These are the types of questions that individuals and their loved ones should be able to find answers for when they search for treatment that best meets their needs.

If these advertising practices lead to reputable and quality treatment, that's great. But, these deceptive practices can have consequences. Whether it's online advertisements, websites, 1-800 numbers, or television commercials – individuals and their loved ones should be able to expect transparency and know who answers the phone or responds to an inquiry when they reach out for help. Individuals who call treatment hotlines are often in a time of crisis and they need help fast and from someone they can trust. They have a right to know what facility they are calling and the type of treatment that facility offers so they can decide whether it is the right treatment for them or their loved one.

Today's hearing will help bring much needed attention to this issue and help us understand the scope of advertising and marketing practices within the treatment industry. Our hope is that a thoughtful discussion will help us establish a baseline for best practices and help inform individuals and their loved ones about how to seek treatment that best meets their needs.

I welcome our witnesses and look forward to their testimony.