

Rep. Joseph R. Pitts
Opening Statement
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
Markup

H.R. 4978, Nurturing and Supporting Healthy Babies Act;
H.R. 4641, To provide for the establishment of an inter-agency task force to review , modify, and update best practices for pain management and prescribing pain medication and for other purposes;
H.R. 3680, Co-Prescribing to Reduce Overdoses Act of 2015;
H.R. 3691, Improving Treatment for Pregnant and Postpartum Women Act;
H.R. 1818, Veteran Emergency Medical Technician Support Act of 2015;
H.R. ____, Opioid Use Disorder Treatment Expansion and Modernization Act;
H.R. 3250, DXM Abuse Prevention Act of 2015;
H.R. 4969, John Thomas Decker Act of 2016;
H.R. 4586, Lali’s Law;
H.R. 4599, Reducing Unused Medications Act of 2016;
H.R. 4976, Opioid Review Modernization Act of 2016; and
H.R. ____, Examining Opioid Treatment Infrastructure Act of 2016

April 20, 2016

The Subcommittee will come to order.

The Chairman will recognize himself for an opening statement.

Today the Subcommittee will consider twelve bills to improve treatment for opioid abuse; report on infants suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome; update best practices for pain management and prescribing pain medicine; allow for co-prescribing of opioid reversal drugs; expand access to medication-assisted treatment; ban sale of DXM to anyone under 18 without a prescription; study the dangers of opioid use in treating sports related injuries; develop standing orders for naloxone prescriptions; clarify when prescriptions can be partially filled; encourage abuse deterrent technologies for opioids; and request a GAO report to Congress on substance abuse treatment availability and infrastructure needs throughout the U.S.

As many of you know, one of this subcommittee’s top priorities has been helping and protecting children and families. These bills that are the subject of today’s

markup, represent our ongoing effort to work together to strengthen public health and address problems in our nation's health care system.

In my home state of Pennsylvania, one out of every four households is affected by addiction. More than 2,400 Pennsylvanians died from overdoses last year, making it the leading cause of accidental death in our Commonwealth.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 120 Americans on average die from a drug overdose every day. Overall, drug overdose deaths now outnumber deaths from firearms. More than 4 million Americans abuse prescription drugs or painkillers; another 517,000 reported past year heroin use, a 150% increase since 2007.

These facts are shocking, but they reflect the reality right in our neighborhoods. It is happening to Democrats and Republicans, to people of every race and religion. It happens to our friends, family members and neighbors. We all know someone – and we share their pain.

Today, we have legislation before us that will begin to address the addiction crisis we face. In 2015, the Energy and Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee held five hearings on the drug abuse crisis. In October, as Chairman of the Health Subcommittee, I chaired a two-part hearing at which we heard from experts like the Administration's drug czar Michael Botticelli and Dr. Kenneth Katz of the Lehigh Valley Health Network.

We discussed several proposals that would improve federal public health policies and help addicts get treatment. Each of these bills deals with a different aspect of the epidemic, because we need a comprehensive plan: not just adequate funding, but targeted funding; not just emergency response, but education and prevention.

These bills would make a number of changes to existing law. They would responsibly expand the number of practitioners who can provide medication-assisted treatment to patients, develop best practices and a national awareness campaign, ban certain drugs to youth without a prescription, help pregnant women who are addicted, and request a report from GAO on the state of our substance abuse treatment availability and infrastructure needs.

Congress will take action on behalf of the families and communities across Pennsylvania and the rest of the country being shattered by this public health crisis.

I want to thank the sponsors of each of these bills for their diligent work thus far. These bills address a complex epidemic and I know that after the subcommittee consideration today, the work will continue.

I support each of these bills and urge their adoption by this Subcommittee. I yield back the balance of my time.