

October 9, 2017

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Health

FROM: Committee Majority Staff

RE: Hearing entitled “Member Day: Testimony and Proposals on the Opioid Crisis.”

I. INTRODUCTION

The Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing on Wednesday, October 11, 2017, at 10:15 a.m. in 2322 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled “Member Day: Testimony and Proposals on the Opioid Crisis.”

II. WITNESSES

Members will hear testimony and proposals on the opioid crises from members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Offices should submit written testimony before 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 10, 2017. Testimony should be submitted in advance to Jay Gulshen (jay.gulshen@mail.house.gov) and Zachary Dareshori (Zachary.Dareshori@mail.house.gov).

III. BACKGROUND

The Energy and Commerce Committee has led a number of bipartisan initiatives to help address the opioid epidemic. From groundbreaking initiatives that are now law, like the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA)* and the *21st Century Cures Act*, resources are becoming available and important policy changes are being implemented.

CARA established a comprehensive strategy for improving evidence-based treatment for patients with substance-use disorders and made significant changes to expand access to addiction treatment services and overdose reversal medications. It also included criminal justice and law enforcement-related provisions. The *21st Century Cures Act* provided \$1 billion in grants for states, the first half of which was made available in April 2017, to be administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Since the passage of CARA and the *21st Century Cures Act*, other issues have emerged in the fight against opioids.

On February 23, 2017, the Committee sent a letter to the Office of National Drug Control Policy requesting information and data related to fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. This was followed by a March 21, 2017 hearing held by the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations reviewing the emerging public health threat of fentanyl. Synthetic opioids like fentanyl are easy and cheap to illicitly manufacture.

On May 8, 2017, the Committee sent letters to the leading wholesale drug distributors and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), requesting detailed information about the shipments of opioids to West Virginia. The town of Kermit, West Virginia, population 400, received nearly 9 million hydrocodone pills in a two-year period. Pill dumping, or distributing large amounts of controlled substances to a small population, preys on vulnerable citizens.

On July 12, 2017, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled, “Combating the Opioid Crisis: Battles in the States”, which examined the challenges states face in the opioid epidemic. This hearing advanced efforts to examine how the federal government can best assist local efforts on the ground to restore communities impacted by the deadliest drug crisis in United States history.

On July 13, 2017, the Committee sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regarding reports of “patient brokers” who are serving as intermediaries and profiting from recruiting patients seeking addiction treatment. From the broker, to the sober home, to the outpatient facility, bad actors are luring vulnerable patients into a cycle of addiction and relapse.

The Committee seeks to gain member input and is soliciting feedback on potential ways to complement existing law and administrative action to combat the epidemic and address acute emerging issues.

IV. STAFF CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Paul Edattel, Kristen Shatynski and Caleb Graff of the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.