

Remarks of Representative Anna G. Eshoo
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on Testimony and Proposals on the Opioid Crisis
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
October 11, 2017

Thank you Chairman Burgess and Ranking Member Green for holding this listening session and giving Members of the House the opportunity to speak about the tragic impacts of the opioid crisis in their Districts. This crisis claims 142 lives each day and has killed more people than our deadliest wars. Over 2 million people have a prescription opioid addiction, 591,000 have a heroin addiction, and we've seen overdose deaths triple in the last 13 years. Opioid abuse touches every American and doesn't discriminate. It affects mothers, fathers, children and even newborn babies.

I've heard from substance abuse treatment facilities in my Congressional District and they report that the number of young people walking through their doors with addiction have strikingly increased in the past decade. This is a national crisis. These drugs are crippling a generation of America's youth.

President Trump appropriately announced that he would declare it a national emergency in August, yet it has been 62 days since he made that announcement and no emergency declaration has been filed.

Instead, in the months since the President announced that he would declare the opioid crisis a national emergency, we've seen constant attacks on the very health care system that provides

treatment and services to those suffering from opioid addiction. Medicaid and CHIP provide insurance coverage for 30% of people suffering from opioid addiction. Medicaid has repeatedly been targeted by attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and now, through the Majority's tax reform plan. It's hypocritical to claim that you are committed to fighting this catastrophic crisis and then, at every turn, undermine the systems in place to treat and support those who struggle with addiction.

Last Congress we took important steps through the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and 21st Century Cures Act to address and treat opioid abuse, but both of these pieces of legislation must secure funding from Congress. We have to make good on the promises we made to those Americans who suffer from opioid addiction and fund the programs that they rely on to receive the treatment and support they need.

Any future approach this Committee or the Administration takes must address the entire spectrum of addiction, from prevention, to crisis response, to treatment and recovery. A law and order approach that only punishes prescription drug abusers does a disservice to our country and impedes progress toward addressing this epidemic.