

Thank you Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone.

Let me tell you about a young man from Rockford, Illinois named Chris Boseman.

Chris passed away in the summer of 2014. He was 32 years old.

He was a kind, tender-hearted son and brother. A back injury led to a painkiller prescription that he soon became dependent on.

And when he could no longer fill that prescription, he began buying pain medication on the street.

But as the costs added up, his dealer told him that heroin would give him the same effects ... for only ten dollars.

After a continuing cycle of overdose, rehab, and relapse, Chris was enrolled in Rock Valley College and studying construction management when, after a year of being clean, he relapsed and died.

This is happening every day, all across the country.

I was proud that Congress came together last summer to pass legislation that helps communities address the opioid crisis...

Which included my bill to improve care for infants born with an opioid dependency due to their parents' addiction.

In fact, we just received the GAO's report that my bill called for.

It reviews and makes recommendations to care for these infants.

But really what it shows is that we have a long way to go.

HHS has a strategy for improving infant care...

But they haven't put it into practice yet.

There is not even a protocol to screen and treat these newborn babies who, through no fault of their own, are addicted.

Which further reinforces that this is not the time to cut Medicaid...

Which pays to treat over 80 percent – that's four out of every five – of our newborns suffering from opioid withdrawal...

And helped 1.6 million people with substance abuse disorders to access treatment.

It has dropped the uninsured rate for the mentally ill down to 5 percent in expansion states.

Medicaid must be protected, not cut.

And I want to stress another point: the opioid crisis is worse in rural communities...

Where drug-related deaths are 45% higher.

Rural states have higher rates of overdose, especially from prescription opioids like the kind Chris was given by his doctor.

And we just don't have the resources to fight back.

We don't have enough doctors.

We don't have hospitals with up-to-date technology and services.

And we don't have public transportation to reach the right treatment centers.

That is why earlier this year I introduced bipartisan legislation to help rural communities better leverage USDA programs to combat opioid and heroin use.

We need to continue to look at solutions that work in rural areas, like telemedicine, which will overcome transportation and access issues.

Thank you. I am happy to yield back.