

It is no secret that the United States is in the midst of an opioid epidemic. Last year, in my home state of Ohio alone, about 86% of overdose deaths involved an opioid. This epidemic can be felt in virtually every community across the country; and today, I want to share a story that will shed some light on some of the good work being done in my district to help combat the opioid epidemic, and to let people know about some of the positives taking place.

I had the honor of visiting Field of Hope, a faith-based, non-profit, treatment facility in Southeastern Ohio that assists area families ravaged by poverty and drug abuse. Field of Hope recovery house was founded by a man named Kevin Dennis, after he witnessed his own daughter become addicted to opioids after she had knee surgery from a high school athletic injury. Her prescriptions ran out, but she was addicted. She ended up in prison several times for theft, and checked into numerous rehab facilities before she fully recovered from addiction. She is now a recovery counselor at Field of Hope, and is happily married with a child. I heard some incredibly powerful and touching stories during my visit to the Field of Hope campus, and I witnessed the good work they are doing firsthand.

We in Congress, and especially in this Committee, have an important role to play in supplementing and enabling the work being done by organizations like Field of Hope. On the front end, we need to develop prevention policies that steer people, like Kevin's daughter, away from opioids in the first place. Innovative non-opioid treatments exist today, and more are on the way, but are not always covered by federal programs like Medicare and Medicaid. We should closely examine the reimbursement policies in place to ensure that patients have access to effective alternatives for pain management without the risk of addiction.

I've also been encouraged by recent efforts by private payers, providers, pharmacists, and patient groups to address the addiction crisis through increased awareness, prescribing guidelines, and new treatment options. I believe Congress can play a role in ensuring that all prescribers are equipped with an education in pain management so they can provide effective pain treatments for patients and timely intervention for those who are addicted.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on the Committee and in the House to find effective solutions to this scourge.