

Testimony of Rep. Tom MacArthur to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Members' Day Hearing on the Opioid Epidemic | October 10, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We have all seen the numbers – drug overdose deaths have increased from 52,000 in 2015 to an estimated 64,000 last year, with opioids involved in the majority of those deaths. In Ocean County, NJ – my home county – someone dies of an overdose, on average, once every 43 hours. So thank you for the Committee's work on this incredibly important subject.

It may be unusual for a Member to sit here and promote other people's bills, even bills written by the other party, but as the Republican Co-Chairman of the Bipartisan Heroin Task Force, representing over 90 members of both parties, that is exactly what I'm here to do.

As the Committee considers legislative next steps to pursue, I want to recommend the Bipartisan Heroin Task Force's legislative agenda for your consideration. We are committed to being rigorously bipartisan – we did not include a bill on this agenda unless it had bipartisan cosponsors and unless the bipartisan chairs all agreed to it. Five of these bills fall under your jurisdiction:

-Rep. Tim Walberg's Jessie's Law, which would help ensure doctors have access to a consenting patient's prior history of addiction in order to make fully informed treatment decisions.

-Rep. David Joyce's STOP OD Act, which would expand efforts to prevent addiction, promote treatment and recovery, and increase first-responders' access to Naloxone and synthetic opioid testing.

-Rep. Hakeem Jeffries's Synthetic Drug Awareness Act, which requires that we investigate how the synthetic opioid crisis is affecting young people specifically.

-Rep. Evan Jenkin's CRIB Act, which would help increase access to treatment for babies with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) due to exposure to opioids during pregnancy.

And **Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick's Road to Recovery Act**, which would address the IMD exclusion, which we all recognize as one of primary barriers preventing access to substance abuse treatment.

We're proud of our member's work, and I would also note that many our agenda's ideas coincide with the White House Opioid's Commission's recommendations. I also note the good work being done by Republican Main Street on this issue—many of the bills they recommend are also on our agenda.

On behalf of my Democratic co-chair Rep. Annie Kuster, our Vice Chairs Donald Norcross and Brian Fitzpatrick, and our 90+ members, I urge you to consider these bills. We'll continue to expand and update our legislative agenda as we tackle additional critical topics like PDMPs and prescriber education, and we stand ready to work with Committee staff however we can to promote good legislation that addresses all aspects of this devastating epidemic.