



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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Pallone: TrumpCare will Intensify the Opioid Crisis

“Repealing the ACA and cutting Medicaid by nearly a trillion dollars over the next ten years, will do nothing but undermine our efforts to treat Americans who are suffering from an opioid addiction”

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. emphasized that the Republican TrumpCare proposal will sabotage efforts to address the national opioid epidemic today at a Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing titled, “Fentanyl: The Next Wave of the Opioid Crisis.”*

Mr. Chairman, the opioid epidemic in our country continues to grow at an alarming rate. In 2015, more than 33,000 Americans died of an opioid overdose, and more than 2 million individuals had an opioid use disorder. According to the Center for Disease Control, 91 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.

Today we are focusing on fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin and up to 100 times more potent than morphine.

Because of its potency, fentanyl is a dangerous substitute for heroin and results in frequent overdoses that can cause respiratory depression and even death. The number of overdose deaths is rapidly increasing.

The death rate from synthetic opioids, other than methadone, increased by 72 percent from 2014 to 2015. This substantial increase in the death rate from synthetic opioids is largely attributable to the increased availability of illicit fentanyl.

I want to thank our witnesses today for their testimony and work on this very important issue. Fentanyl is dangerous not only to users, but also to our law enforcement and public health officials on the front lines of this epidemic.

And I look forward to working together to explore ways that we can better confront the supply of the fentanyl now plaguing our communities.

I would also like to talk today about the treatment side of the opioid epidemic.

Just two weeks ago, Committee Republicans rushed TrumpCare through the Committee, a bill which repeals the Affordable Care Act. The ACA has been instrumental in addressing the current opioid crisis, and, inexcusably, TrumpCare would only exacerbate the crisis.

Thanks to Medicaid Expansion under the ACA, 1.6 million people with substance use disorders now can receive the treatment they need in the 31 states and Washington D.C. that expanded the program. TrumpCare effectively ends Medicaid Expansion in 2020.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, TrumpCare also cuts \$880 billion in federal outlays for Medicaid over the next ten years, which will severely undermine our efforts to fight the opioid crisis. These drastic cuts in Medicaid, made possible by Republican plans to end Medicaid Expansion and to cap the program, will ration care for millions of Americans, including the rationing of substance abuse treatment.

TrumpCare also repeals Essential Health Benefits for Medicaid expansion enrollees at the end of 2019. States would no longer have to offer benefits like substance abuse, mental health services or prescription drugs to millions of Americans who rely on such care.

Repealing the mental and substance use disorder coverage provisions of the ACA would remove approximately \$5.5 billion annually from the treatment of low income people with mental and substance use disorders.

Repeal will take away care from those who are actively seeking treatment and preventive services. We simply cannot afford to eliminate this care in what is oftentimes a life and death situation. TrumpCare, threatens access to life-saving treatment for more than one million people with opioid disorders.

Our hearing today explores the fentanyl problem. However, I would argue that this issue is a part of a much wider opioid problem we are battling. To address this problem, we must make sure Americans with substance abuse disorders can access effective treatment.

Mr. Chairman, I want to work with you to confront fentanyl and the larger opioid problem. However, repealing the ACA and cutting Medicaid by nearly a trillion dollars over the next ten years, will do nothing but undermine our efforts to treat Americans who are suffering from an opioid addiction.

We will not be able to arrest our way out of this problem. Without adequate treatment options for those suffering from an opioid addiction, this problem will only worsen, and so will the deaths and destruction we have seen play out across the U.S.

Thank you and I yield back.

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