

Opening Statement
Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Combating an Epidemic: Legislation to Help Patients with Substance Use
Disorders”
March 3, 2020

According to recently reported CDC data in 2018, 67,000 Americans died of a drug overdose. Overdoses in 2018 alone killed more Americans than the Vietnam War. This is a national crisis.

In 2016 Congress passed the *21st Century Cures Act* and *CARA*, and in 2018 the *SUPPORT Act* was signed into law to stem the tide of addiction and devastation that the opioid crisis has created.

Yet, despite our legislative efforts to give Medicaid more flexibility and increase access to medication-assisted treatment or MAT, according to a 2019 National Academies of Science report, more than 80 percent of the 2 million people with opioid use disorder are not receiving MAT and families and children affected by the opioids crisis also are not receiving the care they need.

It’s clear much more work needs to be done.

Today we will hear from Administration officials responsible for carrying out these laws. We’ll learn about where and why previous efforts have fallen short.

And we will grapple with what is needed to truly end these overdoses.

Our next steps will require overcoming stigma. And they will require spending money. From 1999 to 2018 more than 750,000 Americans died from an overdose. What are we willing to spend to avoid another million deaths?

Among the 14 bills we’ll discuss today, Representative David Trone and Representative Annie Kuster propose providing \$1 billion annually to states and \$5 billion annually to federal programs already in place that provide treatment and support prevention activities. Another part of the solution requires investing in a health care workforce to treat underserved areas. Representatives Paul Tonko, Raul Ruiz, Brad Schneider, Susan Brooks, Lori Trahan (who is in the audience today), and Andy Kim, have bills to create a brand-new health care workforce trained to recognize substance use disorder and are able to prescribe the medication-assisted treatment that we know saves lives.

And it means spending federal dollars to address the stigma against people in jails and prisons who, despite their sentences, deserve health care. People who are release from prisons and jail are 12 times more likely to die of an overdose than the general public.

Currently federal law bars Medicaid recipients from accessing their federal health benefits while incarcerated, so state and local governments face challenges to providing needed medication assisted treatment to people incarcerated. And when an individual leaves jail or prison, they are often left without coverage and can't continue treatment.

Bills by Representatives Tonko and Kuster address these inequities by expanding Medicaid coverage during and after incarceration.

And lastly, we're considering bills from Representative Doris Matsui, David McKinley, and Morgan Griffith to fight back against suspicious drug orders and diversion to stop the illicit flow of opioids into our communities.

I look forward to discussing the impact these 14 bills can have and hearing from the federal agencies in charge of implementing our past legislation.

I yield the rest of my time to a leader on addressing the opioid epidemic, Representative Annie Kuster.