

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph R. Pitts
Health Subcommittee Hearing on “Examining Legislative Proposals to Combat our
Nation’s Drug Abuse Crisis”
October 8, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today’s hearing will consider a number of proposals intended to address various aspects of our Nation’s drug abuse crisis. The Oversight and Investigations subcommittee has held five hearings examining this public health epidemic and current efforts underway to combat prescription drug abuse. It is clear that despite these efforts, the epidemic has continued to grow exponentially.

Today is a good opportunity to better understand what Congress can do to help. I appreciate the Administration witnesses being here and working with us on these complicated issues. I also look forward to the testimony of outside experts on these various bills in the near future.

Prescription drug abuse does not discriminate; it is not limited by geography, income, or age. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, one in five Americans has used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons.

In 2011, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration published a National Survey on Drug Use and Health and found that 1.7 million 12- to 25-year-olds abused prescription drugs for the first time – which amounts to more than 4,500 new initiates per day.

These startling statistics should concern all of us.

Unfortunately, only about 10 percent of people with substance abuse disorders will get any form of medical care. There are many of our constituents and their families that still need help and I applaud my colleagues for working on legislation with that goal in mind.