

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Katie Porter
Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services
Hearing on “China in Our Backyard: How Chinese Money Laundering Organizations Enrich the Cartels”
April 26, 2023

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

If there's one number I want us to remember today, it's 97. That's how many times more Americans died from synthetic opioids in 2021 than 1999. This is a five-alarm fire.

The fire has been burning for years, but it has really started raging within the last decade. And China-based money laundering organizations have fueled it.

Plain and simple, these organizations are making it easier for drug cartels to do business. They are processing illegal money flows quicker and cheaper for the cartels, and the cartels are getting richer and richer selling deadly synthetic opioids.

And let's not forget that it's not just money launderers. China-based suppliers have been providing the raw materials for synthetic opioids for years.

Republican or Democrat, there should be no question that China-based suppliers and money launderers are a big part of the opioid crisis and that more must be done to stop them.

But if there's one thing I've learned about tackling the issues that matter here in Congress, you rarely get to boil it down to one problem, one attack line, and one easy fix. That's especially true when it comes to issues involving multiple countries.

You think it's hard to get Democrats and Republicans to agree on regulations? Try getting the Chinese Communist Party to come to the table with the U.S. to regulate China-based fentanyl suppliers and money laundering organizations.

It's especially hard when we're still repairing the damage done by the last Administration's failed engagement with China. This Administration has the task of undoing the tension just enough to get China to work jointly on this problem.

However difficult, this task couldn't be more important. At the end of the day, the Chinese Communist Party needs to recognize its role in stopping a crisis that's claiming too many lives. The best tools the United States and China have to address these issues are the ones that we unlock cooperatively.

But we also need to be prepared to act alone, especially if the Chinese Communist Party doesn't do its part. And that means sanctions.

On April 14, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions on two entities and five individuals based in China that are responsible for supplying chemicals to produce fentanyl for U.S. markets.

I'm all about holding powerful people accountable, and penalizing big fentanyl suppliers is certainly a step in the right direction.

But just like any problem that builds over the course of decades, one set of sanctions isn't going to fix the problem. Not even one type of solution is going to fix the problem.

To end the opioid epidemic, we have to be just as serious about expanding access to drug treatment resources as we are about cracking down on drug traffickers. The opioid crisis is a complex, multifaceted problem that's going to require collaboration across government agencies.

With that challenging road ahead, we simply can't afford distractions. **Unfortunately, at the same time that Republicans announced this great hearing, they also tossed in a big distraction they like to call, "Biden Border Crisis."**

As badly as we've needed immigration reform for years, this issue is not about immigration. At the end of the day, cracking down on an illegal drug market is primarily an economic issue. That's why we're talking about it in the Health Care and Financial Services Subcommittee. Believe me, I'll be at the front of the line anytime we need to tell our government to do more on this issue.

But let's not misidentify the problem. This issue has been decades in the making, and the buck does not stop with any one person for years and years of increasing fentanyl deaths.

We all have to commit to doing more. If we avoid political finger pointing, I think this hearing will be a step toward just that.

I yield back.

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