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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement of Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Hearing on “Examining the 2022 National Drug Control Strategy and the Federal Response to the Overdose Crisis” June 27, 2022

Today’s hearing focuses on an issue of urgent importance to Congress, to families across the country, and to me personally: overcoming the addiction and overdose crisis that continues to ravage communities in every part of the United States.

As Chairwoman of this Committee, I have worked to ensure that every person dealing with addiction can access comprehensive treatment and care. And when it comes to the bad actors that fueled this crisis, like the Sackler family, Purdue Pharma, and McKinsey, I have used this gavel to hold them accountable for their egregious actions.

This hearing comes at a very difficult moment for our nation.

Overdose deaths in America have been rising for more than two decades, and during the coronavirus pandemic, fatal overdoses skyrocketed to historic highs. Tragically, overdose deaths increased by more than 30% in 2020, and by another 15% in 2021, when more than 100,000 lives were lost.

The Biden-Harris Administration and Democrats in Congress have taken aggressive action to address both the supply and demand factors contributing to this crisis.

Since President Biden took office, we are stopping more fentanyl at the border than ever before. **This Administration has increased drug interceptions, seizing roughly 800 pounds of fentanyl each month. This represents a four-fold increase in fentanyl interdiction over the previous Administration’s efforts in 2019. To build on this progress, President’s Biden’s 2023 Budget calls for more than 10% in additional funding for interdiction efforts—a request I hope all my colleagues will support.**

At the same time, the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress have made significant progress in treating addiction as the disease that it is, by expanding access to treatment and wraparound services.

The American Rescue Plan allocated nearly \$4 billion dollars to services for mental health and substance use disorder. That law also created the first federal fund for harm reduction services.

Additionally, the Administration’s Overdose Prevention Strategy has invested tens of millions of dollars in initiatives to reach underserved communities, combat stigma, and expand access to life-saving treatment. These programs save lives, and I am grateful that this Administration has prioritized them.

Today, we will hear from Dr. Rahul Gupta, the Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, who will testify about the Biden Administration’s 2022 Drug Control Strategy. This National Strategy focuses on what works. It uses evidence-based strategies to build on the progress already made by the Biden Administration, and it outlines a plan to invest in communities, prevent substance misuse, and increase access to treatment and recovery services.

The National Strategy takes bold steps to ensure that medication to reverse overdoses is available to anyone in a moment of crisis—a strong bipartisan priority that will save lives. And the Strategy promotes access to fentanyl test strips, which are a vital tool for overdose prevention, especially among young adults.

The National Strategy also builds on the Administration’s progress to disrupt the supply of dangerous substances into the United States by targeting trans-national criminal organizations that are manufacturing and trafficking fentanyl.

This year’s National Strategy also goes further than any prior drug control strategy to address structural inequities that leave people in some communities with insufficient access to health care, and makes them more likely to be pulled into the criminal justice system as a result of drug misuse.

The overdose crisis affects every community represented by our Committee Members here today—both Democrats and Republicans. **We owe it to our constituents to do everything we can to build on the Administration’s progress and work together to advance solutions to this public health crisis.**

That includes sending to the President’s desk the strong bipartisan mental health and substance use disorder package that the House approved last week. **It also means passing H.R. 6311, the CARE Act, a bill I introduced with Senator Elizabeth Warren that advances the objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy by providing crucial resources to the local communities on the front lines of this public health crisis.**

I thank Director Gupta for appearing before the Committee today and for the Biden-Harris Administration’s continued commitment to ending our nation’s overdose crisis.

I now recognize the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Comer for a five-minute opening statement.

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