

**Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Susan Davis
ECESE/HEWT Joint Subcommittee Hearing
Close to Home: How Opioids are Impacting Communities
Wednesday, November 8, 2017 – 10:30 a.m. – Rayburn 2175**

Thank you, Madam Chair.

As my colleagues have said, the opioid crisis has greatly impacted our communities. In 2015, more than 33,000 Americans died of an opioid overdose, and more than 2 million individuals had an opioid use disorder. In California, more people die from drug overdose each year than from auto-accidents.

That's why it's so important to continue to invest in the federal programs that promote addiction recovery and treatment.

Across the country and in California, Medicaid has been vital to addressing the opioid epidemic. Adults with Medicaid coverage are about three times more likely to have received treatment as inpatients, and almost twice as likely to have received outpatient treatment, than privately insured adults.

As Ranking Member Polis noted, in our efforts to combat this epidemic, it's vital that we invest in the systems and programs that support healthy families and communities. This means a strong workforce. As we've seen with past drug epidemics that have rocked our communities, the opioid epidemic has a strong link to jobs. According to recent research, an estimated 25 percent of the drop in women's workforce participation between 1999 and 2015 can be attributed to the increase in opioid prescriptions. For men, that number is about 20 percent.

And we know that when adults, particularly women, aren't working, it has significant impacts on the economic security of families and communities beyond the immediate loss of income. For example, job loss for a parent can translate into lower wages and difficulty remaining in the labor market for their children later in life.

It's particularly important to note the relationship between opioid abuse and unemployment. This means that individuals may fall out of or have difficulty staying in the job force due to their dependence on opioids or may become addicted after job loss.

We must help individuals remain employed and break down barriers to individuals with substance use disorders re-entering the workforce. This means rethinking employer drug testing policies and using a more thoughtful approach to employment for those with involvement in the criminal justice system. We must also leverage our workforce development system to ensure our nation's workers, especially those in communities or industries impacted by trade and technology, have access to the jobs and skills development they need.

Integrating job training into recovery and treatment efforts is also key. Linking these services can be crucial for helping people re-enter the workforce and improve the probability of recovery efforts long term.

So I look forward to hearing about how our current system can be improved, including ideas on providing key services in the same location, or best practices for partnerships between the workforce development and health systems.

Now, we know that the Trump Administration has declared a Nationwide Public Health Emergency to address the opioids crisis. As part of this declaration, the administration has directed the Department

of Labor to use Dislocated Worker Grants “to help workers who have been displaced from the workforce because of the opioid crisis, subject to available funding.”

Unfortunately, we will not be hearing from anyone from the administration today to get a better understanding of their plans. That perspective would have been key in understanding why they would encourage the use of these grants while calling for a 40 percent cut to this funding.

As I’m sure many of my colleagues today will underscore, substance abuse and its impacts on communities is nothing new. And if there’s anything we’ve learned from our nation’s past failures in addressing substance abuse issues and supporting impacted communities, it is that resources matter.

So I look forward to hearing about what investments are needed to address a crisis of this magnitude without robbing other vital programs, such as family support services and job training, that support healthy families and communities,

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today. I also want to congratulate Dr. Leana Wen on the newest addition to her family.

I look forward to your testimony and hearing more about the how we can help communities impacted by the opioid abuse crisis.

Thank you.