

Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Bobby Scott
Full Committee on Education and the Workforce Markup
HR 4843: The Improving Safe Care for the Prevention of Infant Abuse and Neglect Act
Thursday, April 28, 2016 – 10 a.m. – Rayburn 2175

From efforts addressing early childhood education to the crisis in Flint, Michigan, one of Committee Democrats' main priorities is to ensure that children have quality opportunities early in life to succeed later on in college and career. Children born dependent on addictive substances face severe obstacles to overcome. Tragically, some of these children die from neglect. That doesn't have to happen.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is meant to support these infants born addicted to illegal substances. Unfortunately, nearly every state fails to follow the CAPTA requirements that are meant to ensure children born into these circumstances have a plan of safe care that will help them grow into healthy toddlers in supportive environments.

This bill, the Improving Safe Care for the Prevention of Infant Abuse and Neglect Act, is a strong, positive first step to safeguard the well-

being of our nation's most vulnerable children and to help the families and caregivers receive the guidance and support they need in order to provide a nurturing environment for their children.

The bill requires states to follow through on the assurances in their CAPTA state plans to protect infants suffering from drug dependency. It also works to provide additional data on how many infants are born drug-dependent, and of those infants, how many receive proper referrals and services.

It is important to emphasize that drug dependency is a public health crisis. As such, it should be treated like any other public health crisis. Investments in prevention, intervention, and treatment are required. Studies find that spending more money on incarceration is counterproductive. That is why I cosponsored the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), which passed the Senate 94-1 and is another one of the bills that the House of Representatives is looking to move as part of its initiative to address the opioid crisis.

I welcome this bipartisan agreement to amend CAPTA as part of the effort to intervene and treat those affected by substance abuse. This bill, however, is not a substitute for a complete reauthorization of CAPTA. The only way to fully address the public health crisis of substance abuse is to address all the provisions laid out in CAPTA, not just the standalone provision that was recently highlighted in a recent Reuters exposé. I look forward to using this bill as a springboard for future discussions and reaching further agreement on the legislative initiatives needed to help Americans struggling with drug addiction.

Thank you.