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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, May 13, 2016

MAY 16TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Prescription Pain: Killers

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America is facing an epidemic of opioid addiction that is sadly killing 78 people every day. Statistically, the chances are greater that you know someone who has been affected by opioid abuse than not. In fact, 1 in 5 Americans have a family member who's suffered from addiction to prescription painkillers.

The harsh reality is that the epidemic has reached every single state and region of our country. The faces of opioid abusers are familiar to us all, they are the high school quarterback, the straight A college student or the mother of 3 next-door. As a result, this week the U.S. House of Representatives passed bipartisan legislation to combat America's prescription painkiller crisis by targeting programs to improve addiction recovery and substance abuse programs for at risk high schoolers and college students, improve treatment for families, veterans, women, and even pregnant mothers who can pass addiction on to newborns.

When most people think of drug addiction they think of those who abuse drugs found on the street such as crack cocaine or heroin, but the problem today is much greater and much more complex than the class of drugs we have all heard of before. Opioids include prescription pain relievers like hydrocodone, morphine and oxycodone. The reality is that it is this class of drugs; the kind which can be found at home in your medicine cabinet, that is most commonly abused and killing thousands of people. Of the 21.5 million

Americans age 12 or older that had a substance abuse disorder in 2014, 1.9 million had a disorder involving prescription opiate-based painkillers. Deaths from drug overdoses even outpace deaths from motor vehicle accidents; in 2013, 10,000 more people died as a result of drug overdose than a motor vehicle accident. The epidemic is real, and it is here.

Missouri has been impacted drastically by the growing opioid abuse crisis. Sadly, Missouri has the highest rate of opioid use in the Midwest. It is estimated 235,000 Missourians misuse prescription drugs annually. What's even more alarming is that between 2007 and 2012, Missouri had a 124 percent increase in treatment admissions related to prescription drugs and without action, this number will only increase. Opioid abuse does not discriminate in Missouri and does not discriminate in the towns and close knit communities it impacts across the nation. The epidemic is killing Missourians of all backgrounds, ages and colors.

This week, I along with my colleagues in the House, put politics aside and focused on addressing the country's opioid abuse epidemic to save lives across the country. This set of proposed laws includes measures instructing the Attorney General to dedicate more resources to states trying to combat opioid addiction and improving early intervention and treatment for children born with opioids in their system. In addition, we passed bills dedicating further resources for development of drugs to counteract a prescription drug overdose, establishing addiction mitigation programs specifically for veterans, women and teens and supporting law enforcement's efforts to combat drug trafficking.

These efforts mark an important step in the direction of combatting the opioid epidemic that is claiming thousands of lives across this country. It is time that we help victims of this epidemic reclaim and rebuild their lives to ensure that they get a chance to have a bright future and find their own American dream.

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