

Speaker Ryan: Floor speech urging support for bipartisan legislation to fight opioids

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CONTACT

AshLee Strong, Doug Andres
202-225-0600

WASHINGTON—Today, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) spoke on the floor in support of the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, which brings a comprehensive approach to preventing and treating opioid addiction and stopping the opioid epidemic. His remarks are below:

“Now, Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my wholehearted support for this effort, for H.R. 6.

“Our nation is fighting a grave opioid epidemic. It is a threat to a generation of young people, the very fabric that holds our communities together.

“But, to me, this legislation—this legislation is about hope.

“I’ve got the honor of speaking with and knowing three brave Wisconsin families who have dealt with this. Families that I’ve gotten to know over the course of time.

“Kyle Pucek. Kyle is a guy I know from Janesville. He had an ankle injury, treated with opioid medication, just like a lot of people have. He developed a dependency, and then he eventually turned to heroin.

“He is now clean, and he works with nonprofits in Janesville to encourage others to seek treatment.

"He is helping making sure that people don't make the mistakes he made. And he's making a huge difference.

"Michelle Jaskulski. Michelle has two sons, former high school athletes who became addicted to heroin. And they are in recovery.

"She understands the loneliness that comes with being a mother in this situation. She understands how isolating it can all feel. And now, she advocates for more resources to fight this epidemic, and she supports other families so that they don't feel like they're facing this fight alone like she did.

"Jason Simcakoski. Jason Simcakoski was a Marine who served our country.

"He went to the VA hospital looking for help for his anxiety. He was overprescribed opioids, and he lost his life. His family has made it their mission to ensure that others do not experience the same fate.

"This is the heart of America. After suffering such pain—these families suffered unspeakable pain—but they overcame.

"And now, they're making it their mission in life to make sure others have a place to turn to. That others don't have to go down the path that they went.

"Because asking for help—that is not a sign of weakness. It is actually a sign and an act of strength.

"We all have a role to play in this. And it begins with reaching out, it begins with listening, with being there for one another.

"All of our institutions, at every level, should emulate and encourage this kind of fellowship.

"We should make sure and make it clear that no one is alone, that every life matters.

"Well, this bill is titled with the perfect title: the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act.

"It's bipartisan. It's high time we do it. It is a very, very strong and good step in the right direction.

"It will advance treatment and recovery. It will improve prevention. It will give resources to communities. And it will fight deadly drugs like fentanyl.

"So I want to thank Chairman Walden and I want to thank Chairman Brady, and I want to thank Mr. Pallone and Mr. Neal. I want to thank all the members, all the members of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Ways and Means Committee.

"Let's not stop here.

"Let's not stop until we have [instilled] a sense of hope in all of those who may be struggling.

"Let's not stop until we have ended this epidemic.

"I urge the entire House to vote yes, and I yield back."