

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“America’s Insatiable Demand for Drugs”**

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing today on Americans’ devastating addiction to illegal drugs. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on this difficult issue that has developed into a health emergency in many American communities, while also contributing to the security challenges that a number of our Latin American neighbors continue to face each day.

Drug abuse, particularly prescription drug and heroin abuse, has been a growing problem across our country for many years now. It has led to tragic consequences not just for those who are suffering from addiction, but also for their families and communities. The Centers for Disease Control notes that between 2002 and 2013, the rate of heroin-related overdose deaths nationally nearly quadrupled. In my home state of Delaware, there were 189 suspected overdose deaths in 2014 alone and around 3,000 adults sought treatment for heroin in the state’s primary treatment facilities.

American demand for heroin and other drugs also fuels the violent tactics of the traffickers who move drugs, goods, and people across our borders. American drug demand is also having a dramatic and deadly effect in South and Central America. As our Committee has found, so much of the corruption and violence in the Northern Triangle – Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador – and in other parts of South and Central America is fueled in large part by America’s appetite for illegal drugs. This corruption and violence are a major cause for the surge of migration from the Northern Triangle to the United States in recent years, as well as a source of misery to those who do not flee. I know that General Kelly will speak to the extremely damaging impact our drug use has on our security and the security of our neighbors in the Northern Triangle, not to mention the lives of drug users themselves.

Today, we will have the opportunity to discuss ways to best address the root causes of our demand for drugs. We will also explore the merits of media campaigns, peer to peer outreach and other education initiatives aimed at reducing this demand. I’m pleased that our panel includes Dr. Cheryl Heaton, who has been an instrumental force behind successful public health initiatives aimed at reducing the use of tobacco, particularly among young people. Dr. Heaton will share with us some of the reasons why the important efforts she’s been a part of have been successful, and how we can learn from recent anti-tobacco campaigns to best reach young people who may be using or considering using illegal drugs. And because addiction and substance abuse are medical conditions that can often be treated effectively, we’ll also discuss the role prevention and treatment can play in reducing demand.

In sum, these problems that we’re facing are complex, and the potential solutions are not quick or easy. We know that. Getting a handle on drug abuse and the tragic problems that stem from it will require an all-hands-on-deck effort if we are to successfully address what drives people to use these harmful substances and to help them overcome their addiction. My thanks again to our

Chairman for holding this hearing and to our witnesses for their contributions and their presence here today. We look forward to working with each of you as we continue to take action to identify and address the root causes of America's demand for illegal drugs.