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**Opening Statement of Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY)  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
Joint Subcommittee Hearing on “Close to Home: How Opioids are Impacting Communities”**

The opioid crisis is a public health emergency and Congress must continue working to face the epidemic that has had an impact on all aspects of our society.

Unfortunately, a problem as widespread as the opioid epidemic, which has already had an impact on over 11.5 million Americans, also has taken a devastating toll on local economies and the national economy as a whole, as we’re only beginning to see more clearly.

As the opioid public health emergency continues to worsen, the economy will continue to suffer.

Data from the CDC analyzing opioid overdose deaths by age groups in 1999 and 2015 showed that the people most likely to die of an opioid overdose are between the ages of 25 and 39 years old.

These are people who had entire lives, careers, and untold contributions to make to their communities and our country ahead of them.

Numbers are important, but people with their own stories are at the heart of this crisis.

To Americans who live in some of the areas hardest hit by the opioid crisis, including my home state of Kentucky, they are seeing their coworkers, bosses, friends, and family members suffer from this horrible affliction.

The administration and Congress are coming together to identify community-based solutions to combat this crisis, but the day-to-day hard work fighting this outbreak is already being done on the ground by the people that face this issue every day.

The witnesses we have gathered here today have seen the impact the opioid crisis is having on their communities every day, and it’s important we hear their stories of how it has specifically impacted them as individuals, as well as their friends, families, and coworkers.

When it comes to finding solutions for workforce development needs, and creating more good-paying jobs, we look to state and local entities who are leading by example, and the opioid crisis is no different.

Our witnesses before us have learned a lot in their communities about how to spot opioid abuse and implement successful forms of treatment. It is important we hear about these experiences in order to inform the Congressional response to the crisis.

At this Committee, we talk a lot about how we are addressing the shortage of skilled workers across the country, and how we want to empower people to build the lives they want for themselves. For many workers ensnared in this epidemic, it is critical that they receive the treatment they need to help them return to the workforce, and find a good job once they are drug-free. We also have to acknowledge that the opioid crisis is resulting in too many lives ending far too soon, and we have to look at ways to stop it.

I'd like to welcome Tim Robinson from my home state of Kentucky who is testifying here today. Tim is the founder and CEO of Addiction Recovery Care in Louisa, Kentucky, which is a network of 13 addiction treatment centers. Thank you for the work you are doing to serve your community and the Commonwealth. I look forward to hearing your testimony today.

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