

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
May 24, 2011

Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Crime And Terrorism on
"Responding to the Prescription Drug Epidemic:
Strategies for Reducing Abuse, Misuse, Diversion, and Fraud"
May 24, 2011

Today, the Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism holds a very important hearing on the prescription drug epidemic. I commend the Senator Whitehouse for holding this timely hearing, and for his leadership on this issue. This administration's strong commitment to curbing prescription drug crime and abuse is exemplified today by the participation of the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Gil Kerlikowske and Drug Enforcement Agency Administrator Michele Leonhart. I look forward to their testimony, as well as that of the other witnesses.

Earlier this year, the Office of National Drug Control Policy released its plan to combat prescription drug abuse. The plan reflects significant efforts by ONDCP, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Drug Enforcement Administration to deal with this serious problem, and it will help advance a serious discussion about what solutions work best. A comprehensive response like that reflected in the national plan, which includes education and prevention, is an important step toward breaking the cycle of drug abuse and crime.

At a Judiciary Committee field hearing in Barre, Vermont, last year, Senator Whitehouse, Director Kerlikowske and I heard directly from people on the front lines in Vermont about the state's efforts to combat drug-related crime, and particularly the growing problem of prescription drug abuse. It is disturbing that more and more people are becoming addicted to prescription painkillers like Oxycontin. Perhaps most disturbing is the fact that more and more of our children than ever before are turning to these drugs at an early age.

Cities and towns like Barre are finding that the best solutions to the prescription drug epidemic involve all segments of the community coming together with law enforcement to find meaningful, community-based solutions that address the underlying causes of these problems. Vermont's civic-minded, all-hands-on-deck approach to the prescription drug problem emphasizes prevention and treatment efforts, which are crucial to the success of any anti-drug strategy. It is also important that the Federal Government continue to support community

prevention-based programs like the Drug Free Communities grant program and the Boys and Girls Clubs to bring communities together to tackle these intractable problems.

Prescription drug addiction and related crime continues to hurt the people of small towns and small cities in Vermont and across America, and I am committed to working with Senator Whitehouse and others to find bipartisan, commonsense solutions to the prescription drug epidemic. Today's hearing is an important step forward. I welcome a productive discussion.

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