

Saving America's Future by Educating Kids Act (SAFE Kids)

My home state of West Virginia knows all too well the devastating effects of opioid abuse on individuals, families, and communities. Last year alone, we lost almost 70,000 people due to drug overdose - that's more than the number of people that we lost during the entire Vietnam War. Since 1999, more than **700,000** people died in the United States from drug overdoses, primarily related to prescription opioids. This epidemic is having a lasting effect on our families and communities.

We have a responsibility – all of us – to step up and do everything we can to combat this epidemic. As this opioid misuse and abuse continues, more kids are being raised by grandparents and in foster care. More babies are born with neonatal abstinence syndrome. If we're going to have a fighting chance to break the multi-generational cycle of addiction, prevention needs to start with our children and youth. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported that **1 out of 8 of high school** seniors reported using prescription opioids recreationally. Of those seniors, 7 out of 10 also used another substance like marijuana or alcohol.

THE SOLUTION:

It is crucial that every student is educated on the dangers and consequences of addiction early on in their lives. That means every student – starting in kindergarten all the way through high school – should be taught about dangers of illicit drug use as well as the potential consequences of opioid abuse. That is why I introduced this legislation that will help ensure every student in America is educated on the dangers of substance use including opioids, vaping, and more.

SAFE KIDS ACT WILL:

- Direct the Department of Education in conjunction with several health agencies to develop evidence-based, age appropriate curriculum on the negative impacts of substance misuse and abuse—including but not limited to opioids, tobacco, and vaping.
- Create a new competitive grant program for states to implement the curriculum in the schools. It also allows community coalitions to assist in educating students on the harm impacts of substance misuse and abuse. Priority will be given to states that have been hit the hardest by the opioid epidemic.

**From the Office of
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