

Many years ago, I was one of those students in Mr. Braithwaite's English class. I like to think I tried my best in every class, but Mr. Braithwaite was the kind of teacher who not only taught, but inspired his students to work even harder. He challenged my classmates and me every day, pushing us to write clearly, read carefully, and question the beliefs and assumptions we brought to his classroom.

In the Coachella Valley, the region I grew up in and have the privilege to represent, there are still far too many young people who drop out of high school before they can graduate or pursue a higher education. Teachers like Mr. Braithwaite are helping to show these students that they can achieve their dreams by pursuing their education.

During his nearly four decades of teaching, Mr. Braithwaite has served his fellow teachers and the Coachella Valley Unified School District in various leadership positions and received prestigious recognitions from the California State Assembly, the House of Representatives, and many local advocacy organizations for his excellence in teaching. Most importantly, he has the gratitude of thousands of Coachella Valley High School alumni.

Mr. Braithwaite is joining his wife and fellow teacher, Jennifer Braithwaite, for a well-earned retirement. Over her 38-year career, Mrs. Braithwaite invited Holocaust survivors and Vietnam veterans to speak to her classes, gave out scholarships to her students, and helped bring the Advanced Placement program to Coachella Valley High School. Like her husband, Mrs. Braithwaite has always gone above and beyond to serve her students.

On behalf of all the students whose lives Mr. and Mrs. Braithwaite have touched, I would like to offer my sincerest thanks and congratulate them both on their inspiring and meaningful careers.

CONGRATULATING RAFAEL BARBOZA ON HIS  
RETIREMENT

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Rafael Barboza on his retirement after more than 30 years of service as a guidance counselor for the students of Coachella Valley High School.

For more than 30 years, Mr. Barboza has spearheaded Coachella Valley High School's efforts to make attending college a reality, leading college application workshops and connecting students with financial aid and scholarship opportunities. He has influenced countless students' lives, and our entire community is grateful for his dedication and commitment to the next generation of leaders.

When I was a student at Coachella Valley High School, my goal was to one day attend medical school and become a doctor. That dream often felt very far away, and at times I wondered whether it might come true. If it wasn't for the support and encourage-

ment of my teachers and counselors, especially Mr. Barboza, I do not know whether I would have achieved my lifelong dream of becoming a physician.

Mr. Barboza was my guidance counselor and mentor, as he has been for thousands of students over the years. Few people have had such a positive impact on my life. Mr. Barboza drove me to become a better student and a better person. He taught me the value of hard work, integrity, and perseverance.

Like me, many students in my congressional district aspire to pursue a higher education but often struggle to afford the application fees, tuition, textbooks, and many other expenses. When the time came for me to apply for college and money was tight at home, Mr. Barboza paid for my application, as I am sure he has done for others. Without his generosity, the first step in my journey towards becoming a doctor would never have been possible.

Mr. Barboza has also lent his voice to local and national conversations about the rising cost of higher education. As someone on the front lines of our public school system, I hope he will continue to enrich this discussion with his insights.

In recognition of the positive impact he has had on my life and the lives of countless students and alumni of Coachella Valley High School, it was my privilege to host Mr. Barboza as my guest for President Barack Obama's 2015 State of the Union Address. Now, on the eve of his retirement, I am honored to congratulate my counselor and mentor, Mr. Rafael Barboza, on his well-earned retirement and wish him health and happiness in this new chapter of life.

#### WE ARE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the well of the House, I am proud to be an American, and I am proud to say that today I rise because I believe that separating children from their parents because they are fleeing violence is antithetical to American values.

Mr. Speaker, I rise because I do not believe that this is consistent with the golden rule and that this is not doing unto others as we would have them do unto us if we were similarly situated.

I rise because I believe that this is not what the good Samaritan would do. The Good Samaritan not only provided immediate aid and comfort, but also took the person who had been harmed to a place where that person could receive additional aid and comfort and went so far as to say: I am leaving this amount with you. If this is not enough, I will come back, and I will give you more.

This is antithetical to our values. Separating children from their parents, be it mother or father, is still a separa-

tion of a child from the person whom the child has grown to believe will be there to protect him or her.

This is antithetical to what we believe in. It is antithetical to the notion that we are our brother's keeper, that we look out for others; that there is but one race, and it is the human race; and that all of God's creation was meant to live in harmony as it relates to humans.

Mr. Speaker, this is not being one's brother's keeper. You cannot be your brother's keeper without keeping your brother. We have become a country who would like to see those who are in harm's way helped—but by someone else. If you are fleeing violence in Syria, let's make sure that someone else can help you.

Mr. Jose Escobar, my constituent, was fleeing violence. He was brought up from El Salvador by his mother, trying to save her son, and now he has found himself separated from his wife and his two children with \$20 in his pocket and sent back to El Salvador. I went there to see him. I know of what I speak.

Mr. Speaker, this is antithetical to our values, and it is detrimental to our existence as a great nation. It is time for us to take a stand and demand that this administration that can find reason to criticize football players, that can find reason to say there were some fine people among those in Charlottesville, and that can find reason to call women names, it is time for this administration and this President to end this antithetical policy as it relates to American values.

I proudly stand here as a proud American.

#### THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out for the millions of American families who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic.

Every day we hear another story of parents who have lost their child to a heroin overdose or of young children who are left behind without care as their parents struggle with addiction.

In Alabama, which has the highest rate of opioid prescription use in this Nation, residents average 1.2 prescriptions per person.

Mr. Speaker, this epidemic doesn't discriminate by age or income or gender. The opioid epidemic has taken from families of every background.

Now, more than ever, these victims need our help. It is our job to help them find treatment not as criminals, but as patients in need of care.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that we are finally seeing as a society that addiction is not something to be criminalized but, rather, addiction is, indeed, a public health crisis. It is not a crime. It is a chronic neurological

disorder, and it does make sense for us to find help for those who need it and not to put them in jail.

Unfortunately, during the 1980s and 1990s during the crack addiction, we criminalized that addiction and destroyed so many families, many of whom are in my district. But, Mr. Speaker, I am glad that we see that the opioid epidemic is, indeed, a public health crisis. I am equally glad that, Mr. Speaker, we are finally working in a bipartisan way to actually find the needed help that these families need in order to break such addictions.

Today I am glad to see that Republicans and Democrats working together in Congress are trying to solve the opioid epidemic and to help those in need. At a time when Congress is struggling with partisan gridlock, I am glad and happy to see that this week has been declared by my Republican colleagues as Opioid Week, where we will talk about bipartisan bills in order to solve this crisis.

I am proud to have introduced bipartisan legislation with Republican Congressman PETER ROSKAM. Our bill, the Preventing Addiction for Susceptible Seniors Act, helps prevent abuse among seniors without limiting access to needed medication.

For an at-risk senior, our legislation requires part D to create a lock-in plan that prevents patients from doctor shopping. Our legislation would also streamline communications between CMS and part C and part D plans regarding program integrity.

Mr. Speaker, bipartisan solutions like these are a step forward in our work to solve the opioid crisis. I look forward to my bill with Mr. ROSKAM coming before this body next week. I truly believe that we have the power to end this epidemic.

I have heard reports from Alabama groups that our poison control center is getting fewer calls about opioid emergencies. A new study shows that the opioid prescription rate in Alabama has finally begun to decrease.

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States have implemented prescription drug monitoring programs that have proven successful, and many pharmacists have limited opioid prescriptions to 7 days.

If we are going to put a stop to the opioid crisis, we need to collaborate with every stakeholder. We also need to make sure that our societal safety net is working effectively to give a path out of addiction, rather than letting them fall through the cracks.

I want to take a moment to share a story about a person in my district, Jessica, a constituent from Alabama.

Jessica was a victim of parental abuse as a child. She was introduced to opioids by a doctor for a sports injury in high school. By 17, she was crushing and snorting pills. She received 330 pills a month.

Jessica had three children and lost custody of all three at different points.

She started using heroin after losing custody of her youngest son. Then her brother died of a heroin overdose.

I share this story because I believe Jessica's story speaks to the financial stresses that working-class Americans recovering from addiction feel every day. Now in recovery, Jessica works 10-hour night shifts at Burger King. Given the hours she works, Jessica falls into our State's Medicaid gap. She doesn't qualify to receive Medicaid, so she doesn't have health insurance.

Jessica has been clean for over a year. But, Mr. Speaker, because she doesn't have health insurance, this makes her addiction problem and fighting it much harder.

The bills that we are considering this week and next week are a step toward this. There are no silver bullets. But, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that we as a body can help to address this horrible epidemic. I am glad that we are finally seeing that addiction is not criminal, but rather a public health crisis, and we are seeking to solve it.

#### OPIOID CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this week, the House is considering a number of bills relating to the opioid public health epidemic.

I serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee, and over the past year, our committee has heard from experts. We have had numerous hearings on all facets of the opioid crisis. We have gathered facts, listened to witnesses, including those struggling with addiction; doctors; providers; the Drug Enforcement Agency; and more. Plus, many families and experts back home have informed us and encouraged the Congress to act.

Last year, one loving father in my home district in Tampa, Florida, came to meet with me to share his experience. He said:

Our son has been an addict for the last 5 years. During that time, our family has discovered how impotent the healthcare system, government system, insurance companies, criminal justice system, and our family have been to combat this disease.

Prior to our personal experience, we were like most Americans who believed this was not our problem, but we were saddened by those who experienced the crisis. In addition, we cannot believe how futile and limited our resources and efforts to help our son overcome this illness have been.

We still believe, although to a lesser degree, that the people afflicted with this illness still hold the key to unlocking their own happiness to managing this illness. However, what is abundantly clear now is that the resources necessary to provide even a remote chance for addicts to achieve temporary or permanent remission must be substantially increased. We have invested, personally, over \$100,000 trying to help our son.

His remarks echo what we heard from experts all across the board in our committee, like Dr. Andrew Kolodny, director of Opioid Policy Research at

Brandeis University, who emphasized that treatment has to be expanded exponentially, and it must be easy to access. "We have to build a new system in America that does not exist."

Democrats have urged our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join us in truly tackling the crisis. What became apparent in committee and what is apparent through these small-ball bills on the floor this week and next week is that Republicans still are not there. They are not willing to adequately address this public health crisis. We need a robust, long-term solution that truly meets the challenge of the opioid crisis.

A consensus has emerged, and it is based upon these devastating facts right now. Over 40,000 people are dying from an opioid overdose every year. In my home State of Florida, we are losing about 5,700 people per year to overdose. That was in 2016. That was a 35 percent increase from the previous year.

The CDC says opioid overdoses have quadrupled since 1999. Only 10 to 15 percent of Americans suffering from opioid addiction are currently receiving treatment.

Those numbers cry out for a meaningful, comprehensive approach. But our Republican colleagues have failed to get there with us.

We have been through this before. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, we were struggling with the HIV/AIDS public health epidemic. For many years, the Congress was criticized for not adequately addressing the crisis. There was a harmful stigma involved, just like there is for opioid addiction.

But by the early 1990s, the Congress came together and adopted the Ryan White CARE Act that provided resources all across the country in a consistent fashion and provided funds to local communities and local nonprofits to help us. The death rate from HIV/AIDS is dramatically less.

This is what we have to do when it comes to opioids: provide that comprehensive, long-term solution that simply isn't being demonstrated in these small-ball, little bills that are nibbling around the edges.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, it is very difficult to be proactive in a meaningful way on the opioid crisis when Republicans and the White House continue to drag us backward when it comes to affordable healthcare.

Just last week, the Trump administration and the GOP launched a new attack on Americans with preexisting conditions like opioid addiction. They asked a Federal court to strike down the Affordable Care Act preexisting condition protection. That is the bedrock protection contained in the Affordable Care Act that says, if you have a cancer diagnosis, Alzheimer's, or heart disease, an insurance company cannot deny you coverage, and they cannot charge you exorbitant rates. The GOP has never really been for that protection.