

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING FAMILIES IMPACTED BY THE NATIONAL OPIOID EPIDEMIC

HON. ANN M. KUSTER

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to include in the RECORD the personal stories of families from across the country that have been impacted by the opioid and heroin epidemic. In the U.S. we lose 129 lives per day to opioid and heroin overdose. In my home state of New Hampshire I have learned so many heartbreaking stories of great people and families who have suffered from the effects of substance use disorder.

Earlier this year, my colleagues and I were joined by many of these courageous families who came to Washington to share their stories with Members of Congress and push for action that will prevent overdoses and save lives. Since then, we passed both the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and the 21st Century Cures Act to provide much needed funding and critical policy changes to fight this epidemic.

The advocacy of these families truly is so important to leading change in Washington and I am proud to preserve their stories.

KEVIN “KEV” CAROTENUTO—PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

Kevin “Kev” Carotenuto was born on May 3, 1993. By the time Kevin got to middle school, he was a talented athlete and very involved in sports, however, school just didn’t click for him. Kev started showing signs of ADHD very early on. His mother tried to get him an Individualized Education Program (IEP) but was denied, so she put him in counseling. Kev turned to drugs to cope with the stress of his struggles.

Kev was arrested shortly after his 18th birthday for robbery of three houses in his family’s neighborhood. He didn’t commit the crimes alone, but wouldn’t snitch on his friends. He received an 18 month sentence in county prison and \$30,000 in restitution. Both Kevin’s parents visited him and put money on his books the entire time he was in prison.

Six months after his release, Kev started using heroin. He was in and out of countless treatment facilities until he was sent back to jail in February of 2015. Kev was caught using heroin in a public bathroom and was arrested for violating probation. He was sentenced to seven months in county jail.

Kev was released the Monday before Thanksgiving to a local halfway house. He was put on blackout for seven days and then was allowed to go out for four hours at a time. Kevin worked for the newspaper union as an extra so he would call in daily for work. The Thursday after Thanksgiving Kevin was booked for an 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. shift.

Kev told the halfway house that he had work but proceeded to contact a cellie from jail who came to pick him up. When Kev arrived back at the halfway house he tested

hot for suboxone. He was kicked out immediately and the halfway house never notified his family. Kevin was on the streets for a week before he came clean with his mother.

Kev said it was time for him to be a man and he would get himself to rehab. He was approved for 26 days of treatment. Seven days before his release, Kev’s mother requested a family meeting with his counselor. The counselor informed her that on Monday the aftercare specialist was going to have a conference call between Kev, herself and the counselor. Monday came and went and no call, so Kev’s mother started leaving messages with the counselor. She called every day and left messages—no response.

January 7, 2016, came around and Kev said, “Ma, come get me, I got my coin.” Off she went to pick him up. He came home so happy and ready to stay clean. He went to probation the next day where he asked the probation officer (PO) to see him twice a week to keep him honest, which the PO did for one week. The following week the PO told Kev he didn’t have time to see him so often. The PO ordered Kev to complete IOP, so on January 8th he called and was told the first opening was 22 days away. Kevin went 22 days with no treatment except for NA meetings and a bible study group of men in recovery.

On the 29th of January Kev went to IOP for his evaluation and when he came out he said, “All good, my first session is on February 1st.” On February 1st Kev’s mother woke up and went into Kev’s room and found him sitting on the side of the bed with his head in his hands and his hoodie on. She said his name two times and got no response. She then called 911. When she went to touch Kevin’s shoulder, his stiff body fell to the floor. His mother saw the needle 1/2 full of clear liquid. She went to move his hoodie to get to his neck to check his pulse and all she saw was the side of his face—purple and cold. He was Dead. A mother’s worst fear comes true.

Kev passed away on February 2, 2016, from an overdose of poisoned heroin.

JESSICA MARY MILLER—GLENSHAW, PENNSYLVANIA

Jessica Mary Miller died at the age of 31. Jessica struggled with addiction for 15 years and was also afflicted with severe mental illness.

Jessica died at the hands of her mentally ill boyfriend. She had been in the relationship for only five months and thought she found the “love” of her life. Jessica had been doing much better than she had been past, and her mother was hopeful she may be ready to overcome her struggles with addiction. But like many women who battle addiction, she desired a partner who would make her feel worthy and wanted. It didn’t matter what they looked like, how old they were, or what they provided financially—she just needed assurance from a romantic relationship.

One night, after Jessica boyfriend’s unemployment check came in, they got into a fight about how the money was going to be spent. Her mother only assumes this was the main argument from the phone call she got from Jessica that night. After they spoke on phone at approximately 10 p.m., the police were at Jessica’s mother’s door at 5 a.m. to tell her Jessica had been strangled and was found outside the steps of her apartment. At first, the police told her mother that Jessica

died by suicide but the boyfriend was later charged and convicted for murder by strangulation and is now serving 25 years in jail.

Jessica’s mother is writing to show that not only drug overdoses are killing our children, but also the fall out of both drug use and mental instability. Not only girlfriends or spouses, but the innocent children who can’t fend for themselves when their parents are so engulfed in their addiction.

It has been three years since Jessica’s death and there isn’t a day that goes by that her mother doesn’t think of her. Many might find this strange, but her mother does not hate the person who took Jessica’s life, as he is just as sick as Jessica was. They chose to be together and she knew what he was like, and chose to stay. A mentally healthy person would not put herself in that position. This was not Jessica’s only bad romantic relationship, they were all bad, and her addiction drove her from one bad relationship to another.

KENT DAVID CHARLES EDWARDS—PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Kent Edwards, 18 years old, died of an accidental prescription drug overdose in 2003. One night during his sophomore year of high school, Kent called his mother to say that he was out with some friends and wasn’t coming home that night. He was calling because he didn’t want to worry his mother, but when they hung up she knew something was wrong. Kent’s mother waited for him when he came home at 6:00 a.m.

Life changed for the Kent’s family that morning. Kent went to the doctor and tested positive for substances. His family restricted and monitored Kent’s activities. They made a lot of changes that next year and Kent adjusted fairly well. He transferred schools and graduated with ease. Kent got a job he loved and spent time with his friends and family. His family thought they had dodged the bullet—Kent didn’t want to be addicted to drugs so they mistakenly thought they were in the clear. It seemed that all was well, but Kent’s family didn’t know any better.

Before Kent turned 18, he was scheduled to have his wisdom teeth removed. His mother filled the prescription before his surgery. As she was looking at the bottles, she noticed that one of them had fewer pills in it than the other. When she confronted Kent about it he admitted to having taken some.

She asked Kent why and his answer was chilling. He asked his mother to think about a time in her life when she had felt “Great”—“The Best.” When she nodded Kent said, “The first time you get high, it’s better than that. It feels so good that you want to feel that way again—only it’s physically, chemically impossible.” He explained how the drugs alter your brain chemistry and why people take more and increase their frequency of use in an attempt to get back to the feeling of that first high.

On a Monday in September, 2003, there was a knock on the Kent’s family’s door and soon they heard the words: “Your son has died.”

Kent and two other kids crushed some Oxycontin and washed them down with beer. Kent got sleepy and the other two left. As Kent slept, the drug slowed his respiratory system down until it stopped completely. His roommate found him the next day—already gone.

CALEB SMYTHIA—LOUDON, TENNESSEE

Caleb Smythia, oldest of four, was his mother’s biggest fan and the idol of his

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

brother and two sisters. Caleb was a great cook, loved all kinds of music and had a passion for playing the guitar. Music became so much a part of Caleb's life because he found it to be therapeutic.

Caleb's struggles began at age 16. He went through many rough patches and began abusing methamphetamine. When objects and money kept missing at home, his mother filed an unruly charge against him and Caleb became a child of the state. He spent over a year and a half in three different foster homes and one group home. Unfortunately, Caleb was never placed in a treatment facility, even though he relapsed and tested positive for five different drugs in his system.

When Caleb eventually went home, he seemed to have his life back on track. After graduating high school, Caleb had hopes of going to culinary school. However, within days after graduating, Caleb returned to his old friends who were abusing methamphetamine and pills.

Eventually, problems with Caleb were so bad that his mother told him he was no longer welcome in her home. One late night in the pouring rain, Caleb knocked on the door. His mother told Caleb she would take him to the ER or to a treatment facility but he couldn't come into the house. Even though Caleb was at such a low point and begged for help, the ER turned him away.

Another night Caleb arrived at his mother's door bloodied and broken. Caleb had been beaten and tortured for two hours by eight members of the local college baseball team. One of the players had given Caleb \$35 and asked him to get Percocet. Caleb was so deep in his addiction that he kept the money in order to get a fix. To retaliate, the team forced a mutual friend to trick Caleb into another drug deal. When Caleb went to meet the friend, he was abducted, thrown in the back of a truck, and held down by his throat. The baseball team drove Caleb to a field where he was kicked and stomped while curled in a fetal position. Caleb begged for his life and promised to pay them \$50 if they let him go. The next day, two of the boys came to Caleb's mother's house to get the money. One of them was holding the same baseball bat they had used to break Caleb's knee the night before. Three of the eight boys were charged and convicted of felony assault for which they received 10 years probation. Caleb refused to testify against his attackers in court because he felt like he deserved the beating.

The Caleb's family soon moved and everything seemed to be well again. However, Caleb's mother worked two jobs and didn't know that Caleb was getting into his grandmother's pain pills. Caleb went to live 200 miles away with his father. Unfortunately, Caleb wasn't kept safe—his father also had a substance abuse disorder. Caleb overdosed and died on Christmas morning of 2015, after being sold a black market pills that contained fentanyl.

MICHAEL "MIKE" JAMES TURNER—NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

So many people think "drunk" or "junkie" when they see someone suffering from addiction. What they can't see is a person that is stuck in a body they can no longer control.

Mike Turner suffered from addiction. He was also type I diabetic and had a chiari malformation in his brain. He had a long history of alcohol and drug abuse and in the end, it was heroin that took him. Those were Mike's labels, but that is not who Mike was—the man he was, was an affectionate, exciting and hilarious dad, boyfriend, son, brother, and uncle. He had integrity, he was honest, and charitable. Mike participated in Chiari Malformation Cancer, Autism and Addiction events. He planned on going back to school to become an addiction counselor.

Mike acknowledged his issues and fought to better himself in the best way he knew how. Mike even went through a parenting course to try to be a better dad. He loved his kiddos—Mike Jr. and Amber—more than anything. He was all about his family and looked forward to weekly Sunday dinners at his mom's house.

Mike was a funny guy—pretty clumsy and always getting into mischief. He was so positive and encouraged everyone around him in their pursuits. Everyone who knew the real Mike loved him.

Mike had his demons, however, and he knew that overcoming his addiction was the most important thing. As long as he was using he was useless to his kids, his family, and his job. Mike knew the hurt his addiction caused others and that destroyed him. It devastated his family to witness his hurt and share his pain. Mike tried detoxing and treatment numerous times. He was part of a group called the SNAKES—Soldiers Needing Accountability Keeping Each Other Sober in Christ. In April 2016, he graduated from a program with 9 months clean.

On April 22, 2016, just three weeks after his graduation, Mike was living with his girlfriend, Theresa, again. He woke up with a start that morning and said he had low blood sugar. By 8:30 a.m., his sugar was up and he said he was feeling much better.

Mike's last message to Theresa was at 9:17 a.m.: "no worries im alive :cP." Theresa called him after her meeting around 10:30. He didn't answer so she called again . . . still no answer. She kept trying. Theresa had another meeting that ended around 11:45. She tried calling again and there was still no answer. Fearful that his sugar had dropped too low, she ran home. When Theresa got home around 12:30 p.m., she opened the door and found Mike.

Mike had relapsed after being 9 months clean. Theresa had no idea that he had been using. He overdosed some time between 9:17 and 10:30 that morning, on April 22, 2016. He was 33 years old.

NICHOLAS WADE BRANHAM—FREDERICK, MARYLAND

Nicholas Wade Branham passed away from a heroin overdose on July 15, 2016. He was 30 years old.

Nicholas was born on December 30, 1985. He struggled with addiction for several years, along with his girlfriend, who preceded him in death on January 16, 2011. It was her passing that helped him to get his life together and to get clean. Nicholas had been sober for almost five years; therefore, his passing was complete shock to me and utterly devastating. He was my son. He was my best friend. He was my everything.

Nicholas had a passion for tattoos and cooking. He was very sarcastic and funny—he always made me laugh. His family misses his laughter so much. Nicholas had such a kind heart. His mother loves to hear his friends tell stories of how Nicholas would prank them, but more importantly of how he would rescue them in a time of need or just be there for them if they needed someone to talk to.

"I really just don't understand any of this," writes his mother. "I hate that this is my son's legacy because he was so much more than that. Nicholas was a good person, a son, a grandson, a nephew, a cousin and a friend. He is so sorely missed. Rest in peace my dear sweet boy."

JOHN "BUBBA" CARTER—PELHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

John "Bubba" Carter died of a drug overdose on July 16, 2016.

Bubba was a sweet young man. He was always looking out for others and putting them above himself. Watching Bubba self-de-

struct was like a heart palpitation that just wouldn't quit. He was one of those people that you only get once in a lifetime; one of those people who changes your life the second they enter it. Their smile lights up your life, and it's something that never fails to make your day one hundred percent better. Bubba will always be that person for his sister—the person who could always make her day better just by being around. Bubba never knew how much he was loved and how many people cared about him. He grew up in a loving home with parents that never kept alcohol or prescription drugs around. His mother is a police officer, who sees the tragedy of what drugs do to families every day on the streets, and his father has been in recovery for 20 plus years; it just goes to show that drug addiction can happen to anyone.

Bubba started using drugs when he was 13 years old. First it was marijuana and alcohol, and soon after he was introduced to Adderall, Percocet, cocaine, and heroin. His drug addiction took over his life quickly. The times Bubba was strong enough to ask for help, he would. Bubba went to his first treatment facility when he was 15 years old, after he overdosed by mixing adderall and alcohol while at a party in town. "It was hard to see my mother struggling to get her son back from the drug monsters that controlled him," writes Bubba's sister.

Bubba attempted many times to live a life of sobriety. At 16 years old, he entered his second treatment facility, after having high levels of THC that put him into a drug-induced psychosis. After completing this program, Bubba attempted to attend AA and NA meeting regularly but the triggers that surrounding him were too strong. The stigma of drug addiction surrounded him everywhere he went. Bubba encountered people that would attack his sobriety by bringing up his past drug use. This made him feel as if no matter how hard he tried to stay clean he was still living in the shadows of his addiction.

On March 17, 2016, with the help of family and friends, Bubba entered his final detox and treatment facility. After three weeks, he left the facility and returned home. His family learned later on that Bubba maintained a full 30 days of sobriety on his own between March and April. He was very proud of himself. Bubba relapsed in May of 2016.

Two weeks prior to Bubba's death on June 30, 2016, his entire family, along with some of his friends, attempted an intervention. At the time Bubba was no longer living at home. Although his family kept in contact with him, they had decided to stop enabling him hoping he would choose recovery again. During this intervention the police were also involved and tried to help him, but because Bubba knew all the "right" words to say, their hands were tied. They then learned that Bubba had started using heroin intravenously.

On that same day but before the intervention, Bubba called his sister and ask to meet up to talk. She frequently recorded conversations with him hoping one day she could use them as a strategy to encourage him to stay clean. His sister immediately went to see him. When they met, Bubba spoke about his goals, and how he no longer wanted to live a life that made him feel unworthy to be loved. Bubba didn't want to cry anymore, didn't want to feel hungry because he spent all his money of drugs and didn't want to struggle. That's when his sister noticed the track marks on his arms. "My heart ached. My face drained in color and I started to shake. I didn't want to see my little brother hurting. Before I drove off, Bubba asked for a hug and said 'If I don't see you in two weeks, I want you to know I love you.' But I didn't know two weeks was going to come so soon."

Even though Bubba was suffering from addiction, it never stopped him from caring for and loving others; he was always putting people before himself. After his death, his family have had many strangers and friends contact them and told them stories about their interactions with him. Bubba always expressed to his family, that he was an outsider and did not have many friends, but they knew that was his addiction making him believe those lies. As his family saw from the outpour of support from extended family, friends and the community, Bubba was loved beyond measure. They got a letter from a neighbor that said Bubba helped her weed her yard because he saw her struggling to walk with her cane. She didn't know who he was until she saw his obituary in the paper. Another girl told them about how Bubba paid for her coffee in the drive thru and they became close friends and encouraged each other daily.

"Addiction is real," writes Bubba's sister. "It is affecting families everyday and making them question if they're going to see their loved ones ever again. It's time for us to unite and break the silence."

"I know that if my brother was here he would tell everyone struggling that it is okay to reach out for help, it doesn't make you weak. You need to associate with people who inspire you, people who challenge you to rise higher, people who make you better. Don't waste your valuable time with people who are not adding to your growth. Your destiny is too important."

"Our brothers and sisters are the first real relationships we have outside of our parents. Bubba was my brother—my first friend and the first person I learned to play with, share with, and laugh with. Bubba was the first person who picked on me, fought with me and taught me forgiveness. A life without him was never in sight. And I think that's the hardest thing to get over."

HONORING THE 90TH BIRTHDAY OF THOMAS H. BIRDSONG III

HON. DONALD S. BEYER, JR.

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th birthday of Thomas H. Birdsong III, a great Virginia business leader.

Mr. Birdsong has a lifetime of leadership and commitment within the peanut commodities business. His company, Birdsong Peanut, is the largest company of its kind in the United States. Birdsong Peanut Company got its start in 1914 as a feed and seed store in Courtland, Virginia. In 1939 the founder of Planters Peanuts, asked the company to relocate near his factory in Suffolk, Virginia. That plant is still in operation today. Mr. Birdsong partners with farmers throughout the United States and sells to peanut product manufacturers around the world. His clients consist of companies such as Mars, Snickers, and Smuckers.

Thomas H. Birdsong III graduated from Randolph-Macon College in 1949, received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award from the college in 2009, and in 2013 received an honorary degree of law. He has also served as a philanthropic leader at Randolph Macon College. His commitment to quality and service has proven successful not only in the peanut business but also in community relationships both at home and around the globe.

I am honored to congratulate Mr. Birdsong on his 90th birthday celebration; I thank him

for the many lives that he has touched along the way. It is for these reasons that I join Mr. Birdsong's family and friends in wishing him a blessed 90th birthday and continued health and happiness in the years to come.

MITCH MORRISSEY

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Mitch Morrissey as he completes his tenure as the Denver District Attorney. I would also like to thank Mitch's wife, Maggie, for lending her husband to the Denver community for so many years. During his time in office, Mitch made it his mission to protect the public, advocate for victims of crime, and respect the rights of the accused. He worked tirelessly to promote stronger relations between law enforcement and the Denver community.

For 11 years, Mitch has been the chief prosecutor for the Second Judicial District. Prior to his election, he worked in the Denver District attorney's office for 20 years, 10 of which he served as the Chief Deputy D.A. In his role as D.A., Mitch was responsible for thousands of felony and misdemeanor prosecutions each year, supervising over 70 attorneys and 120 staff members, all while prioritizing victims' needs. Mitch led an invaluable team of Victim Advocates with a particular focus on those in under-served areas and communities. He is nationally known for his expertise in DNA technology, applying it in criminal prosecutions and working to ensure DNA science is admissible in our courtrooms. In addition, Mitch's relationship with and support for Colorado's law enforcement community has been exceptional. Thanks to his hard work, Mitch is also the recipient of numerous awards, including "Prosecutor of the Year," by the Colorado District Attorneys Council and the "Patriot Award," by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Mitch is also a true son of Colorado. He is a Denver native, a graduate of the University of Denver College of Law, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Mullen High School.

I congratulate Mitch for his achievements. I applaud his dedication, leadership, and commitment to justice for Colorado's citizens. I am proud of the work he has accomplished and wish him all the success and happiness in the years to come.

APPLAUDING ERRICAL BRYANT FOR HER SERVICE TO ALA- BAMA'S FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. BRADLEY BYRNE

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my deepest appreciation for my Director of Operations, Errical Bryant, for her years of service to Alabama's First Congressional District. Today marks Errical's final day serving the people of Southwest Alabama.

Like so many on Capitol Hill, Errical started out as an intern for Congressman Sonny Calhoun in 2000. After working for a period of time as a door attendant in the U.S. Senate, Errical returned to serving the First District as Constituent Services Director for Congressman Jo Bonner. She later added the responsibilities of Administrative Director and Scheduler. Errical served in this position for over ten years, until Congressman Bonner retired from Congress in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, I asked former Congressman Jo Bonner to share his appreciation for Errical. Congressman Bonner said, "Simply put, Errical is a wonderful human being—one of the finest people I know—and her many characteristics of honesty, hard work, dedication, and patriotic duty are the very qualities that will well serve America's next Attorney General. There are very few people in Alabama who have interacted with our office over the past 14 years who have not had the pleasure of working with Errical Bryant. In many ways, she has become the face of Alabama's First Congressional District in Washington and she has always made visitors feel extra special and at home, forever representing Congressman Byrne and me in the most professional manner humanly possible. While Errical's strengths are considerable, her talents are unlimited and her love of country is second to none."

When I was elected to Congress, one of the first pieces of advice I received from Congressman Bonner was to hire Errical. I distinctly remember my wife, Rebecca, and I meeting with her to discuss the position. During our meeting, Errical said "If you do everything I tell you to do, then you will be a really good Congressman." Having worked with Errical over the last three years, I can say there was a lot of truth to that statement.

As my Director of Operations, Errical handles everything from scheduling meetings to managing office finances to planning special events. She is a master of the little things and keeps the office running smoothly and effectively. Despite all the stress and pressure of a Congressional office, Errical keeps the train on the tracks and the schedule moving.

She has also helped countless people from Southwest Alabama arrange successful visits to our nation's capital. Upon their arrival to Washington, she has been a welcoming face ensuring southern hospitality remains ever present in our office. In addition to planning everyday visits, she has overseen ticket distribution for multiple presidential inaugurations and major gatherings.

Errical has arranged important visits to Southwest Alabama for other Members of Congress, cabinet officials, and foreign ambassadors. These visits were planned and executed perfectly, which helped leave a positive impression of our part of the country on both national and world leaders.

As our internship program coordinator, Errical has also helped mold and shape the next generation of leaders. She has instilled professionalism and confidence in countless young professionals that will serve them well in whatever career path they take.

In addition to all of her official duties and responsibilities, Errical has served as the office's unofficial party planner and executive chef. Displaying the same southern hospitality she shows to our constituents, Errical has organized countless celebrations for co-workers,