

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair Manning, and ranking member Thomas, my name is Joe Stevens. I have had the pleasure of getting to know most of you through my ongoing career as a government affairs professional here on Capitol Square. But I am not here today representing a client, but rather as a concerned citizen – concerned about the opiate epidemic, as we all are, and its impacts on my community and communities all around this state and across our country. I am here today to ask for your support of House Concurrent Resolution 10.

By way of background, my involvement with this Resolution began with the viewing of a documentary about 1 year ago called “Not In Vein,” which tells the story of the opiate addiction crisis here in Ohio. While I had a certain level of awareness of the opiate epidemic facing our state and country prior to viewing this film, I found this documentary to be compelling on several levels, but in particular in its discussion of how foreign cartels are contributing to this scourge, especially those operating along our country’s southern border. The fact is that the operations of these cartels are having an impact not only along our southern border, but also in our neighborhoods. “Not In Vein” includes commentary from nationally recognized reporters and professionals in the intelligence community, who have dealt with cartels, have seen firsthand how they operate, and the level of sophistication with which they operate. The primary recommendation about how to further deal with these cartels in the opinion of these professionals is what is comprised within HCR 10.

HCR 10 urges the Federal Government to designate foreign drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, so that the government may use all appropriate means at their disposal to mitigate and eliminate their operations - operations that are responsible for the deaths of family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors, and are placing huge and costly burdens on our state and country. Specifically, HCR 10 is urging the federal government to take this action under the provisions of Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189), which authorizes the U.S. Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Attorney General, to designate an organization as a foreign terrorist organization when certain criteria are met. These drug cartels meet such criteria in that they are foreign in nature, engage in or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorism, and they threaten the security of United States citizens, as well as the national defense foreign relations, and economic interests of the country. By designating these drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, the Federal government would have at its disposal, if it so chooses, enhanced intelligence capabilities, the ability to freeze financial assets of the cartels, pursue those who provide material support to the cartels, and if necessary, enhanced military options. This is what we are asking this committee to favorably approve.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to have with me today Tom Thompson and Heidi Riggs. They are here today to lend their testimony in support of HCR 10. They both bring a particular viewpoint – Mr. Thompson as someone who has extensive experience in the addiction treatment field, and Ms. Riggs as a mother who lost her daughter to an opiate overdose. Both Mr. Thompson and Ms. Riggs appear in the documentary “Not In Vein.” They have witnessed firsthand the terrible impacts of the opiate epidemic, and demonstrate the need for doing all we can to eradicate this epidemic, including the passage of HCR 10.

Additionally, Derek Maltz, a former DEA intelligence officer, who has extensive experience, and is considered a national expert on cartel operations, has submitted written testimony in support of HCR 10. Mr. Maltz sends his regrets about not being able to appear here in person, but asked me to reaffirm his strong support for the provisions of this Resolution.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify.