Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, and Ranking member Thomas, let me first thank you for allowing me to be here today.

My name is Heidi Riggs and I am the Chief administrative officer for Alvis, a nonprofit human services agency that provides highly effective research based treatment programs and housing for men, women and their children who have struggled with addiction and for women who have been victims of human trafficking. 80% of our clients are struggling with addiction.

However, today I am not here in an official capacity for Alvis, Mr. Chairman I am here before this committee because I represent the ***collateral damage*** the heroin and opioid epidemic has had on ***every*** community in the State of Ohio. I represent one of the thousands of Ohio moms who lost a child to a heroin overdose.

My daughter Marin died 7 years ago – January 28, 2012 two weeks after her 20th birthday… She was beautiful, smart and had a smile that lit up a room. Then she was gone. From the time we found out she was using heroin she only lived 18 months.

She was my everything and since her death, I have taken my pain and turned it towards advocacy.

In 2014 I was hired by the Ohio Attorney General in the heroin unit and traveled the state addressing the stigma and assisting communities with resources. I produced a video with the Attorney General titled Marins Story The Battle Against Heroin which has had over a million views; I appeared on 60 minutes with other Ohio families who were affected by this national health crisis.

Since my daughter's passing, my goal has been to do whatever I can to prevent another mother from having to live with the *inconsolable pain* I am still forced to deal with every day.

The last 7 years I found myself questioning this epidemic and the magnitude of lives lost to this disease sweeping across the state and the nation.

A little more than two years ago some people I knew who worked in the area of treatment approached me about helping produce a documentary on the epidemic.

When I first got involved with the documentary team, I met a group of people who looked at this epidemic in a very different way. I met people who worked in national security, military intelligence, federal law enforcement and investigative journalism.

During one of the first meetings, the director drew four squares on a white board. He labeled them supply, distribution, community and treatment. He said, "The first two squares are mostly controlled by foreign entities and internal gangs such as MS-13 and they are multibillion dollar organizations. The square labeled, treatment is where a lot of public dollars go and, sadly, it is an industry that was growing at a dramatic rate.

The final square, community is where all of the resources are being drained. This is the neighborhood level, our Ohio neighborhoods, where families lose kids, EMTs are constantly called to revive overdose victims and police and sheriff departments are facing an enemy with massive resources and an unlimited supply of drugs.

After that meeting, I attended a briefing on cartel operations along the Southern Border. Up until then, I had no idea the level of sophistication these organizations operated at -- and it made me angry.

Then, to top it off I later saw the National Drug Threat Assessment report that is published by the DEA. In that report there was a map that identified where Mexican Drug Cartels operated on U.S. soil. I looked at Ohio there was Dayton and Columbus.

And sadly, not only are these drug distribution points, they are also collection and distribution points for human trafficking.

The Mexican Drug Cartels don't fly planes into buildings but they aggressively ship poison into our communities, they control and destroy families.
As I mentioned, I represent some of the collateral damage of this epidemic and it is my hope that by putting this resolution before the U.S. congress we can help reverse this deadly trend. Because Mr. Chairman, if this epidemic is not stopped, it will eventually change the landscape of our state and nation forever.