## Good morning Co-Chair Grassley. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this hearing. As you know, my wife and I lost our son Chad to a fentanyl overdose on November 1 of 2016. In March of 2017 my wife and I, along with the support of the Eastern Iowa Heroin Initiative and Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA), were able to begin a nonprofit organization called Community Resources United to Stop Heroin (CRUSH). There were 72,000 overdose deaths nationally that year. This small grassroots organization went to work raising awareness around the dangers of heroin and other opioids. We told of Chad’s journey as we ran the gauntlet of treatment centers and mental health professionals for 24 years of our lives. We provided support in an open non-judgmental way with our Family and Friends Support Group. This simple yet powerful process of bringing community together has proven to be effective for not only support, but as a point of contact for resources. Starting CRUSH went like this. We let people who are in recovery, wanted to be in recovery, or maybe just contemplating recovery, know what we were doing. While doing this, our treatment centers, hospitals, community mental health providers, housing specialist, education, prevention, and so on were made aware. We found a location, we sat in a circle, and we spoke from our heart. I know this sounds simple, maybe too simple, but it works. What we had done is something that was done 100’s of years ago. When there is a problem in the community, who better to deal with the problem than the community. I dubbed a phrase. I call it collective wisdom. Everyone in the circle brings something. Everyone has something to offer. We all have one job and that’s to lift each other up.

## I see other benefits that come from this approach. Agencies that attend provide the invaluable service of answering questions for the community they serve, about what services they offer, and how to access them. Sometimes this includes how to speed up the evaluation and referral process, or how to stay safe until you can get the needed treatment. Parents and loved ones can ask questions of those in recovery, what helped them to get to treatment, and what to expect after treatment. Parents support each other during and after the meetings. If you want to know the latest trends, ask the people that are living it, they always know. All of this is done in an environment where one does not have to deal with the stigma of a substance use disorder. An arena where everyone is on a level playing field and where those that provide the services in our community come to understand they can learn from those that seek these services. A place where we’re all experts in the fields of substance use disorders and brain health.

In a few days from this hearing, it will be five years since my son’s death. The year he died there were 72,000 overdose deaths in this country. This year we are looking at 92,000 overdose deaths. Fentanyl, a more dangerous opioid than heroin, pours into our country. Methamphetamines follow, and the two often become a deadly combination. Until this flow is stopped, overdose deaths will continue to rise.

I would conclude that the supply of these substances in our country now, will continue to add to overdose deaths for years to come. However, that is a different battlefield for those that are better suited to fight. My battle lies here at home. I fight alongside my loved ones, neighbors, parents, and families. Those of us that know the pain substance use disorders bring to our family and community. These hard-fought battles have made us experts in our own right, but often the tools we need are just out of our reach. I feel the State of Iowa does a lot of things right when it comes to dealing with the needs of our citizens with substance use disorders. I also feel our State is brave enough to say we can do things better.

A few years ago, I went to be trained as a Peer Recovery Coach, a free training offered by the State of Iowa. I even went a step further and became a Trainer of Trainers. Keep in mind, I’m in my 60’s at the time, trained as a Social Worker, a Certified Addictions Counselor, a retired Probation/Parole officer, a person in long term recovery (38 years as of two days ago), and someone that had a loved one that struggled for 24 years. I came home and was excited. I was excited with my plans to start a Recovery Community Center. Knowing there was a Request for Proposals, I got home and read it to find out I needed matching funds. I can’t remember the exact number, but let’s say $50,000.00. This of course was not feasible. These types of proposals put the grassroots organizations out of the running quickly. I would ask that there would be a funding stream designed for grassroots organizations to apply for. Let us train for, be supported, and be the support on the front end, so we can be that lifeline in our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity,

Rod Courtney

Executive Director

CRUSH of Iowa