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Thank you Chairman Souder and the Subcommittee for allowing me this opportunity to speak to you today. On behalf of the RogersLowell Area Chamber of Commerce and our community anti-drug coalition, I would like to welcome you to our community.

You may have noticed, Benton County and all of NW Arkansas are enjoying tremendous growth and prosperity. We have been recognized as one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. We have 3 of the global leaders in their industries here in our midst, Wal-Mart Stores Incorporated, Tyson Foods, and JB Hunt Transport. On the surface, we are a booming metropolitan area. Underneath the surface, we are quietly experiencing the economic and human impact of a very dangerous and defiant monster, methamphetamine.

In less than ten years, methamphetamine lab seizures in Arkansas have skyrocketed from 54 meth labs seized to over 1200 meth labs seized according to our state crime lab. Each year that passes brings an increased number of labs found in our communities. Our jails are filled with felons charged with crimes related to methamphetamine. Our social services are ill equipped to handle the effects that methamphetamine has had on our families. Gentleman, if it can happen here, it can happen anywhere.

By now you have heard from the law enforcement perspective of the impact of methamphetamine, I would like the opportunity to describe the affect it has had on our communities. I would like to provide you with two examples to illustrate the effect methamphetamine has on our communities:

You have lived in your home for years. You have raised your family, your kids have gone to school and you attend church every Sunday in this peaceful little community. But you now find yourself uprooting your family and hastily moving miles away, not because of greater job opportunities, but rather, out of fear. Fear for your life, and fear for the lives of your family. Within the past week a meth lab was discovered on a neighboring property. Not a mom-and-pop operation, but a large, well equipped compound, where night vision and security cameras are utilized, where armed guards sit in trees, where a veritable arsenal of semi-automatic weapons explosives are used to protect the operation. The alleged operators of this meth lab are now out on bail and all of your neighbors are living in fear that they may be considered informants. An entire neighborhood, forced to leave their homes, and the lives that they have become accustomed to, because of fear of retaliation by a small militia of methamphetamine producers. No one in this country should have to live in such fear.

My final example is focused on the greatest of all victims of methamphetamine, the endangered children who are exposed to methamphetamine use and manufacturing. Our resources have been taxed to their limits with innocent victims of this supposed victimless crime; children who do not go to school, children who are not fed and taken care of, children who learn and participate in the process of manufacturing because that is what they see their parents do, children who are exposed not only toxic chemicals and potential explosions, but are also exposed to sexual and

domestic abuse, and live in the filthiest environments that you could possibly ever imagine. One local child was discovered in a meth lab with their nose-crusts shut by repeated nosebleeds due to inhalation of toxic chemicals. Another local child was given methamphetamine in their nursing bottle to make them stop crying. Children born in our community are testing positive for methamphetamine, and children are dying because of it.

Our communities need help. We need your help. Our communities must be mobilized to combat the demand for illegal drugs. We must teach our leaders, our businesses, our schools, our churches, and our families how to stop methamphetamine before it starts.

We must arm communities with the tools that they need to fight when methamphetamine ravages their infrastructure. The cost of human lives and families is too high. Meth will not go away on its own. The only way that we can successfully defend our communities against meth is to arm them with the proper resources.

I ask the subcommittee to re-examine the current drug policy and its initiatives. Please allocate more desperately needed resources to local communities to fight their wars against methamphetamine. It is the local communities that will put up the strongest fight in the war on meth because they have the biggest incentive to fight to win.

I strongly urge you to recognize and respond to the destruction that methamphetamine brings to the lives and families of our small and middle sized communities across this country. I challenge you to actively be involved in finding solutions to this problem before it continues to grow and further damage the quality of life we have come to expect in Northwest Arkansas and similar communities all across the country. I commend you for taking the time to come here and consider this issue because that is the first step toward finding the desperately needed solutions.