

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
MINORITY (202) 225-6074  
<http://oversight.house.gov>

**Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney  
Opening Statement  
Full Committee Hearing  
“The Role of Purdue Pharma and the Sackler Family in the Opioid Epidemic”  
December 17, 2020**

For too long, justice has been out of reach for millions of American families whose lives have been ravaged by our nation’s opioid epidemic.

For decades now, parents and family members have watched with broken hearts as their loved ones struggled with opioid addiction.

**Since 1999, nearly half a million lives have been cut short by opioid overdoses in the United States. These lives were taken from us too soon. They were taken unnecessarily, and they were taken unfairly.**

**For each life lost, there have been many other family members—parents, siblings, children, and loved ones—left to pick up the pieces.**

**And right there in the middle of all this suffering was Purdue Pharma, the manufacturer of the highly addictive prescription painkiller OxyContin.**

This company played a central role in fueling one of America’s most devastating public health crises. Purdue has generated more than \$35 billion in revenue since bringing OxyContin to market.

Purdue has been owned by the Sackler family since 1952. The Sackler family has profited enormously from the OxyContin business. Since bringing this painkiller to market, the family has withdrawn more than \$10 billion from the company.

Purdue has now admitted that after it got caught in 2007 — after it pled guilty and paid a fine — it continued to commit crimes for another decade, like nothing had happened.

**Documents obtained by our Committee, by the Department of Justice, and by state attorneys general show that members of the Sackler family were directly involved with the day-to-day operations of the company, and they launched an incredibly destructive, reckless campaign to flood our communities with dangerous opioids.**

**At the behest of the Sackler family, Purdue targeted high-volume prescribers to boost sales of OxyContin, ignored and worked around safeguards intended to reduce prescription opioid**

**misuse, and promoted false narratives about their products to steer patients away from safer alternatives and deflect blame toward people struggling with addiction.**

And most despicably, Purdue and the Sacklers worked to deflect the blame for all that suffering away from themselves, and onto the very people struggling with OxyContin addiction.

**Yet, despite years of investigation and litigation, no member of the Sackler family has ever admitted to any wrongdoing, taken any responsibility for the devastation they caused, or even apologized for their actions. In their settlement with the Justice Department, Sackler family members admitted no liability.**

**I believe it was appropriate that Purdue pleaded guilty to criminal charges, because that's what this was—a crime. It was a crime against the American people.**

**And with all the evidence that the Sackler family was directly involved in Purdue's criminal actions—they were pulling the strings, in fact—they should not escape accountability for these criminal actions this time around.**

Today, for the first time, two members of the Sackler family—David Sackler and Kathe Sackler—will be testifying publicly before the American people about their role in the opioid crisis. They held senior positions in the company and on the Board of Directors. As these documents show, they placed their insatiable thirst for personal wealth over the lives of millions of American families they destroyed.

**It is my hope that today's hearing will give the American people—including the scores of victims who have had their families shattered—an opportunity to hear directly from those responsible for these atrocities.**

I do want to thank both members of the Sackler family appearing today for agreeing to testify voluntarily without the need for subpoenas. We will also hear from the CEO of Purdue.

I would like to note that this investigation was launched by my predecessor, Chairman Elijah Cummings. He cared deeply about this issue because he saw how Purdue and others intentionally targeted the most vulnerable among us. He worked very closely with another senior member of our Committee, Congressman Mark DeSaulnier of California, who I now recognize for 2 minutes for his opening statement.

It has always been this Committee's mission to focus on the people directly affected by the issues we examine. Since we announced this hearing, the Committee received dozens of letters and submissions from individuals and families across the country whose lives have been affected by addiction. I ask for unanimous consent that these letters and statements be entered into the official hearing record. So ordered.

I would now like to play video statements from individuals who have bravely come forward to share their personal experiences with addiction with the Committee.

Before I recognize Ranking Member Comer, I would like to say that I know this issue is just as

important for him as it is to me. Our staffs have been working together on this investigation and on this hearing, and I want to thank him for helping us arrange today's hearing.

We may not see eye-to-eye on every issue, but the opioid crisis has ravaged communities across the country, and it does not discriminate based on red state or blue state.

Mr. Comer, I recognize you for as much time as you would like.

###