

On a warm evening outside Kinnick Stadium in Iowa City, Iowa, a stage is set up. The Powerben for Congress banners and a large American flag. A crowd of people gathers, awaiting a speech...

Good evening Iowa City! Thank you all for coming out here tonight. If we can get the kind of energy you hawkeyes show in Kinnick Stadium on election day, there is no way in hell we lose this thing.

On the other side of this stadium is the main University of Iowa Hospital, a world-renowned medical center and a point of pride for this community. Over the past few years, this hospital and ones like it across the country have been seeing an influx of a particular type of patient: drug overdoses. The opioid epidemic is exactly that: an epidemic. Thousands of Americans have seen their lives uprooted by its presences and millions more felt its effects. In 2017, 72,000 lives were lost to overdoses. That's 197 people dying **every day**. But despite this ever-present presence in our lives, communities across the US are saying the same thing: more needs to be done. Enough is Enough. The Democratic party and I stand firm in our commitment towards ending this crisis. This means increasing funding to local paramedics so that the communities hit worst by the epidemic can afford the life-saving drugs they need. This means promoting needle exchanges and spreading awareness about the issue. The right's "Just Say No" mentality has failed over and over and it is time for us to finally put the Opioid epidemic to bed.

But as needed as they are, these measures and measures like it don't address the source of the problem. We, as a country, treat those struggling with drug abuse as criminals. Years of the War on Drugs and GOP hard lining have made getting help harder and harder. Our prisons are full of people serving non-violent drug charges who had they simply gotten the help they needed, could have gone on with their lives as productive members of society. Society has failed many of these people and it is time for that to stop. It is for this reason that I will be seeking to decriminalize all drugs in the US. Instead of locking up drug abusers, we should be sending them to rehab where they can truly heal. Many countries around the world have adopted this approach to great success, so I believe that it is the best way forward for the United States.

I will be happy to answer any of your questions on the Democrats' drug policies. You are my constituents and hearing your voice is important. Goodnight!

