

**Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa**  
**Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**Field Hearing on “A New Era in the Fight Against Methamphetamine in Iowa”**  
**Tuesday, October 13, 2015**

Welcome to everyone here this morning. Today’s Senate Judiciary Committee field hearing is focused on the evolving methamphetamine problem in Iowa. Some may think meth is yesterday’s problem, and indeed it seems like other illegal drugs often make the headlines. But during my annual 99-county meetings, I’ve heard a lot recently about the persistence and changing nature of the meth problem in Iowa.

I’m told that meth-related treatment admissions are at an all-time high here. And last year, nearly half of all drug-related prison admissions in our state resulted from the trafficking or abuse of meth, also an all-time high. So meth is obviously continuing to impact Iowa in terrible ways.

Today I’d like to learn more about the current trends relating to meth here, promote awareness of the problem, and see if there are any new ways the federal government can help.

Meth is sometimes referred to as “the world’s most dangerous drug.” It’s highly addictive, and can methodically destroy lives, families, and communities. The children of meth users can face neglect, or health risks from exposure to the hazardous chemicals that are used to create the drug. Indeed, one of the unique aspects of meth is that it can be made at home by those addicted, by using common ingredients found in hardware stores and pharmacies. When combined, these ingredients are highly toxic and combustible, posing a threat to an entire household.

The risk that meth poses to families and children has been a concern of mine for many years. In 2006, I authored legislation that created a program to help support regional partnerships here in Iowa that provide treatment services, counseling, and skills training for families impacted by meth. The goal was to break the cycle of addiction, and to help keep families together.

In addition, Congress began erecting barriers to meth production in 2005, when it passed the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act, which I was proud to co-sponsor. The law placed limits on the amount of medicine containing common meth ingredients, or precursor chemicals – like pseudoephedrine – that a customer can purchase at a time. It required pharmacies to sell these medicines from behind the counter. And it instituted a system to track sales of these substances to prevent bulk purchases. Iowa also passed a similar state law.

A few years later, I was one of the authors of the Methamphetamine Production Prevention Act, which became law in 2008. That legislation made it easier for pharmacies to use electronic logbooks to monitor sales of meth ingredients and for law enforcement to identify bulk purchasers. And a few years later, the Combat Methamphetamine Enhancement Act of 2010, which I also co-sponsored, strengthened this regime even further.

These laws have proven highly effective in drastically reducing the presence of meth labs in our communities. Today, law enforcement’s seizure of meth labs is at almost a 20-year low in Iowa.

That success is a tribute to the hard work of so many here, including Governor Branstad and Director Lukan.

So then, how is meth still such a problem? Where is the drug product on our streets coming from?

Some have resorted to using what's known as "shake-and-bake" or "one-pot" labs to cook meth. This is essentially using single plastic bottles to mix the ingredients together. This method remains highly dangerous, but can only produce small amounts of the drug. So this doesn't account for what's happening.

No, most of the meth in our state now appears to be coming from Mexican drug trafficking organizations. These organizations have entered the marketplace in response to the increasing difficulty of producing meth domestically. And they have virtually flooded the market with their product. Between 2009 and 2014, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported a 300% increase in meth seizures on the southwest border.

The meth these Mexican organizations are trafficking into our communities, often referred to as "ice," is created on an industrial scale, through a process that leads to a much higher purity than meth produced in labs here. And it is far cheaper as well. It's no wonder the problem hasn't gone away.

So we need to keep looking for solutions at the local, state and federal levels. In the Senate, I lead an annual effort to maintain crucial financial support for state and local law enforcement. And earlier this year, Senator Feinstein and I introduced the Transnational Drug Trafficking Act of 2015. If enacted, the bill would make it easier for the Department of Justice to prosecute Mexican cartels who harm our communities by trafficking in either meth or its precursor chemicals.

I'm pleased to say that after my Committee passed the bill, it passed the full Senate last week. We're going to do everything we can to persuade the House of Representatives to act and send it to the President's desk for his signature soon.

All of our witnesses today have valuable experience and knowledge about the meth problem in Iowa. In particular, I'd like to point out the great work that our first witness is doing to support families in crisis due to substance abuse here in Iowa. Denise Moore is a former meth addict herself. Her story should give hope to anyone struggling with this awful disease.

I thank all of the witnesses for being here, and look forward to hearing their testimony. I now recognize Congressman Young for his opening remarks.