



COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRATS
ENERGY & COMMERCE
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2015

CONTACT

Christine Brennan — (202) 225-5735

**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Markup of Public Health Bills—H.R. 1344, H.R. 1462, H.R. 1725, and H.R. 2820**

Thank you, Chairman Pitts, for holding this markup on four important public health bills. I am pleased that all four bills have robust bipartisan support and continue this Committee's tradition of a collaborative approach to public health legislation. All four of these measures will surely improve the health of our nation.

H.R. 1725, the National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (NASPER) Reauthorization Act, helps States establish and maintain prescription drug monitoring programs in order to combat prescription drug abuse, a public health crisis affecting communities across the country. Approximately 6.5 million individuals in the United States were prescription drug users for nonmedical purposes in 2013. PDMPs aid in combatting that problem by helping prescribers, pharmacists, and law enforcement officials track the misuse of prescription drugs. Mr. Whitfield and I have worked on this bill for a number of Congresses and I'm hopeful that once reauthorized we can ensure the program is finally funded. I also want to thank Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bucshon for joining our efforts this Congress.

H.R. 1462, the Protecting Our Infants Act of 2015, targets a sad reality of our country's opioid epidemic: prenatal opioid abuse and the steep increase in the incidence of neonatal abstinence syndrome or NAS. NAS occurs in newborns who were exposed to opiates while in their mother's womb and is associated with negative health outcomes including preterm births, low birthweight, and complications such as respiratory distress.

The bill would establish a comprehensive national response to this urgent public health crisis. H.R. 1462 would require HHS to develop recommendations for the treatment and prevention of prenatal opiate abuse and neonatal abstinence syndrome, it would require the CDC to assist states in collecting data to monitor the problem, and would direct HHS to develop a coordinated research and programming strategy to address the public health challenge of NAS. I

want to also thank Rep. Katherine Clark for her leadership on this critical and timely issue and am pleased that we are moving this legislation forward.

H.R. 2820, the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Reauthorization Act continues our highly successful *Be the Match Registry* for bone marrow and umbilical cord blood transplantation. I'd especially like to thank Representative Matsui for her continued leadership on this issue and am pleased that we are working together to ensure continued federal support for this program that helps patients in need of bone marrow transplants find a match. For nearly 20,000 patients each year, such transplants are life-saving. Of those patients, 70 percent will not find a match within their family member and will rely on the *Be the Match Registry* to find a non-relative donor. The reauthorization legislation will ensure that federal support continues for this life-saving program.

Finally, H.R. 1344, the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act of 2015, which was introduced by Representatives Capps and Guthrie, would reauthorize the successful Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program. Because of the program, today approximately 97 percent of newborns receive screening for hearing loss. That is a major accomplishment when compared to before the creation of the program when less than half of all newborns received hearing screenings.

In addition to early detection, the program helps ensure that children have early access to interventions and treatments that are critical in minimizing a hearing-impaired child's risk of developmental delays, especially communication, social skills and cognition. This bill would ensure that we continue to provide federal support for this important and successful public health program.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you and our colleagues as we move these important public health bills forward.

###