



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 24, 2016

**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  
Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2017 HHS Budget”**

Good morning. Thank you Chairman Pitts for holding this hearing today. And thank you, Secretary Burwell for your testimony. Today we are meeting to discuss the President’s Fiscal Year 2017 Health and Human Services Budget Proposal. As is often stated, budgets are about priorities, and I’m pleased to see that the President’s proposed budget aligns quite well with what should be the top priority of this committee: ensuring access to high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

First and foremost, this budget recognizes a simple truth: The Affordable Care Act is achieving its goals. As a result of the ACA, 18 million Americans have gained access to both high-quality health insurance, and the peace of mind that comes with maintaining coverage. Of course, more could be done, which is why I’m pleased the President proposed additional incentives for the remaining states that have yet to expand Medicaid. Medicaid Expansion has been life-changing for the millions of Americans that have been able to access health coverage through Medicaid- many for the first time in their lives. In the 19 states that have yet to expand Medicaid, more than 4 million people could gain coverage, states could realize major savings in other parts of their budgets, and over \$4 billion in uncompensated care costs could be avoided. Democrats have already introduced legislation to put the President’s proposal into action, and Congress should act swiftly to enact the bill into law.

Beyond building upon known successes, the budget also directs funding into known areas of need. To put it simply, our nation’s biomedical research budget is simply inadequate. As a Committee, we have already recognized and acted upon this fact when we passed the bipartisan 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act. In that same spirit, I applaud the proposed \$755 million allocated for NIH and FDA through the Vice President’s National Cancer Moonshot Initiative. Over 1.6 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer this year and it is our responsibility to ensure all Americans have the best shot at a cure.

Finally, the President's budget recognizes the devastating effects of the heroin and opioid abuse crisis. Sadly, my home state of New Jersey is not immune from this epidemic. In fact, if every one of our residents addicted to heroin or prescription opioids lived in the same city, it would hold a population larger than that of Newark. That is why I have introduced a comprehensive bill, H.R. 4396, the Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and Reduction Act, to address heroin and prescription drug abuse. I would like to thank you for your strong leadership on this issue, and I urge the committee to act quickly to put a halt to this public health emergency.

As a side note, Secretary Burwell, I know I will not have enough time to discuss this issue today, but I would like to have a follow up conversation with you about the Indian Health Service. Specifically, I would like to address concerns that have been raised about the quality of care provided by hospitals in the Great Plains Area as well as to get an update on the continued implementation of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

Thank you and I yield the remainder of my time to Rep. Matsui and Rep. DeGette.

###