



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

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CONTACT

CJ Young — (202) 225-5735

Pallone Opening Statement at Antibiotic Resistance Hearing

Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing on “Combating Superbugs: U.S. Public Health Responses to Antibiotic Resistance”:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Antibiotic resistance is a significant domestic and global threat to both public health and national security. I am glad we are taking the opportunity to examine this pressing issue.

I want to begin by emphasizing that antibiotics are incredibly valuable tools that have made once-fatal infections easily treatable. Antibiotics have transformed our healthcare system.

But as use of antibiotics has spread, the threat posed by antibiotic-resistant bacteria or superbugs has grown. Without effective, coordinated, and decisive government action, we risk entering into a post-antibiotic world, where common infections could once again become life-threatening. The recent discovery of the mcr-1 gene on a colistin-resistant strain of the E. coli bacteria signals that this day is closer than it has ever been before.

We see alarming statistics about the rates of overprescribing of antibiotics, both for unnecessary and inappropriate use.

At the same time, we have seen that drug manufacturers are unable to produce enough new drugs to meet this threat. There is no question that our arsenal of effective antibiotics is dangerously low today as a result of antibiotic resistance. It is a dire situation.

That said, I am encouraged by the attention and funding we have placed on antibiotic resistance in recent years. Last year, the White House unveiled its National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria, which sets forth ambitious goals to fight antibiotic resistance. All the agencies before us today play critical roles in that effort. In Fiscal Year 2016, we are devoting over \$830 million to fighting antibiotic resistance, and

President Obama has requested \$1.1 billion towards this effort for Fiscal Year 2017. These are important investments.

But in order for us to effectively address antibiotic resistance, we need to make this a priority for the foreseeable future. This is not an issue we can address for a few years and then ignore. Antibiotic resistance is a reality of nature—bacteria begin to mutate and develop resistance as soon as a new antibiotic begins to be used. We must develop long-term strategies and guarantee long-term funding to fight antibiotic resistance. And once we have begun implementing those strategies and ramping up funding, we must follow through on our commitments.

It is also important to emphasize that this is a global threat. It is not enough to address antibiotic resistance here in the United States and hope that will keep us protected.

From a global perspective, we must recognize that we are only as strong as our weakest link. In some places, antibiotics we use sparingly in the U. S. are available over the counter. In many countries, a lack of hygiene, sanitation, and basic infection control in medical settings results in increased antibiotic consumption. If we do not want these superbugs here in the U.S., we need to stop them from developing both here and abroad. We must also improve global surveillance of antibiotic resistant bacteria and antibiotic consumption. Stopping the spread of anti-resistant bacteria is a global threat, and therefore its solutions must be global in nature.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to hearing about the promising work at each of your agencies and how we in Congress can be your partners moving forward.

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