

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Markup of 15 Health Care Bills, Full Committee

July 19, 2023

We are here, nearly a week after the Health Subcommittee's markup of these bills and unfortunately, the Republican majority has failed to make any progress on moving forward with a consensus reauthorization of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act. This is not only disappointing, but also an abdication of our important responsibility to reauthorize this law to prepare for and respond to public health emergencies and threats. This is the first time in the history of this law that it is being brought to the full Committee for a vote in a partisan fashion. I believe that is dangerous considering we have just witnessed first-hand with COVID-19 how important pandemic response is. It should not be partisan, and we should be working together to protect the health and well-being of the American people.

For months, Democrats have offered commonsense proposals to ensure we are prepared for the next emergency. We have been more than willing to work with the majority to find a path forward to ensure we reauthorize these important programs on time before the September 30 deadline. We also offered amendments during the Subcommittee markup that dramatically improved this partisan bill, but every amendment was rejected by the Republican majority. At each turn, we've been met with opposition from Republicans. And now, the Senate HELP Committee is expected to markup a bipartisan PAHPA agreement later this week that includes many of the provisions that Committee Democrats have been pushing for months to address the drug shortage crisis. That means House Republicans are the only ones standing in the way of Congress acting to provide relief to patients impacted by these drug shortages.

Fortunately, there is a comprehensive alternative that we should all support today. Every Committee Democrat has introduced a serious and robust PAHPA reauthorization bill that applies the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensures we will be better prepared for future public health emergencies, including the ongoing drug shortage crisis. I want to thank Representative Schrier and Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Eshoo for their leadership on this legislation. It represents the action that this Committee should be taking today and provides better hope for the future.

While Republicans refused to work with us on this public health preparedness bill in a bipartisan fashion, I am pleased that we were able to work together on the SUPPORT for the Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act. Tragically, the opioid epidemic continues to impact every community across the country. The package before us today will reauthorize critical programs included in the SUPPORT Act five years ago, as well as some new provisions to expand prevention, treatment, and response efforts to the opioid epidemic.

Since the Subcommittee markup last week, I am pleased we were able to reach a bipartisan agreement to include several important Medicaid policies in the SUPPORT Act reauthorization. An amendment we'll be taking up later includes policies that will help connect justice-involved individuals with Medicaid while they await trial. It will also help ensure people who are incarcerated are connected to Medicaid upon their release. For those incarcerated individuals struggling with opioid use disorder, the time of their release can be particularly dangerous. This legislation is going to help them get the treatment and support that they need.

We were also able to work to address many of my concerns with the two IMD provisions before us. The bill before us strikes a good balance. It will expand access to coverage, connect beneficiaries to treatment, and ensure that people are treated in the setting that is right for them, which for the vast majority of people will be a community-based setting.

And we found a path forward on xylazine, and I am committed to continuing to work with our agency partners, both FDA and DEA, to work through any implementation issues.

Finally, it's disappointing that Republicans continue to take a partisan approach to another program that has traditionally garnered overwhelming bipartisan support. The Republicans are using the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education Program to attack medical care for transgender youth. Committee Republicans are inserting themselves into the very private decisions that should be left to doctors, patients, and their parents. They are also disrupting the training of pediatricians at a time where we are suffering a pediatric shortage.

Today, Committee Republicans are openly rejecting the opportunity to pass a reauthorization of the CHGME program on a bipartisan basis and are instead including extreme and dangerous language to restrict care for transgender youth. I believe these actions are targeting transgender youth who are just trying to find their way. I think it's discriminatory and beneath this Committee.

And with that, I yield back.