

Opening Statement

Rep. Gene Green

Health Subcommittee Hearing: “Improving the Medicaid Program for Beneficiaries”

September 18, 2015

Good morning and thank you all for being here this morning.

We are here to examine four bipartisan bills, each of which makes key improvements to the Medicaid program.

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing. It is both an opportunity to advance these worthy legislative proposals, but also to build on the Committee’s record of bipartisan success.

As we know, nearly one in 10 Americans is impacted by a rare disease.

The Ensuring Access to Clinical Trials Act, introduced by Representatives Lloyd Doggett, allows patients with rare diseases to participate in, and benefit from, clinical trials without risk of losing critical benefits.

The bill makes permanent the Improving Access to Clinical Trials Act (IACT), a law enacted in 2010 that permitted patients with rare diseases to receive compensation for participating in clinical trials, without that compensation counting towards their income eligibility limits for SSI and Medicaid.

This is scheduled to sunset on October 5.

Without extending and making IACT permanent, people with rare diseases will be discouraged from participating in clinical trials.

At a time when there is such great need to develop new therapies, promoting access to clinical trials for patients in need of treatments is something we should all support.

H.R. 670, the Special Needs Trust Fairness Act was introduced by Ranking Member Frank Pallone and Representative Glen Thompson.

This important legislation will correct an error in the law that prevents capable individuals with disabilities from creating their own special needs trust.

People with disabilities often need help covering the high costs of long-term services and support.

Federal law allows individuals to use special needs trusts to retain some assets, for the purpose of supplementing expenses that are not covered by public assistance programs.

Unfortunately, an oversight in current law makes it incredibly difficult for individuals with disabilities to set up a special needs trust on their own.

This has the effect of deeming all individuals with disabilities incapable of handling their own affairs, which is blatantly false and discriminatory.

The Special Needs Trust Fairness Act would correct this injustice. I want to thank our Ranking Member for his long history of leadership on this issue.

The Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly or “PACE” is a community-based, long-term service and support program designed to provide quality, integrated care to some of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens.

Under this proven care model, patients who are eligible for nursing homes are able to remain in their homes and receive medical support services through adult day centers.

The PACE Innovation Act of 2015 will allow the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to pilot the PACE care model with new populations, where high-quality, fully-integrated care is likely to be effective.

Finally, the Medicaid Directory of Caregivers Act is a draft proposal that responds to recent reports, which highlighted challenges patients have with provider directories in our health systems.

Too often, it is difficult for patients to be sure if a doctor is affiliated with their health plan and providers are uncertain if they have been included in a newly established insurance network.

Confusing or misleading provider directories have led to a rise in “surprise billing” where patient faces unexpected, costly out-of-network medical bills.

This timely draft legislation requires states that participate in fee-for-service Medicaid to publish a provider directory on a regular basis.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Committee to further strengthen the Medicaid program in key areas, and build on past success.

Each of these bills is the product of thoughtful, bipartisan consideration and work.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today, and look forward to the discussion on the legislative proposals under consideration.

Thank you and I yield back.