



# COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & COMMERCE

CHAIRMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR.

## MEMORANDUM

October 22, 2021

**To:** Subcommittee on Health Members and Staff

**Fr:** Committee on Energy and Commerce Staff

**Re:** Legislative Hearing on “Caring for America: Legislation to Support Patients, Caregivers, and Providers”

On Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at 10:30 a.m. (EDT), in the John D. Dingell Room, 2123 of the Rayburn House Office Building, and via Cisco WebEx online video conferencing, the Subcommittee on Health will hold a legislative hearing entitled, “Caring for America: Legislation to Support Patients, Caregivers, and Providers.”

### **I. H.R. 1474, THE “ALZHEIMER’S CAREGIVER SUPPORT ACT”**

#### **A. Background**

In 2020, the estimated health care costs for the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of dementia, totaled \$305 billion,<sup>1</sup> with that cost projected to reach \$1.1 trillion in 2050.<sup>2</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 16 million Americans provide over 17 billion hours of unpaid care for loved ones suffering from Alzheimer’s and related dementias each year.<sup>3</sup> Approximately two-thirds of these caregivers are women, one in three is age 65 or older, and one in four are caring for a child or children under the age of 18 while simultaneously acting as a dementia caregiver.<sup>4</sup> The total average lifetime

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<sup>1</sup> Winston Wong Pharm.D., *Economic Burden of Alzheimer Disease and Managed Care Considerations*, American Journal of Managed Care (Aug. 7, 2020) ([www.ajmc.com/view/economic-burden-of-alzheimer-disease-and-managed-care-considerations](http://www.ajmc.com/view/economic-burden-of-alzheimer-disease-and-managed-care-considerations)).

<sup>2</sup> Alzheimer’s Association, *New Alzheimer’s Association Report Examines Racial and Ethnic Attitudes on Alzheimer’s and Dementia Care* (Mar. 2, 2021) ([www.alz.org/news/2021/new-alzheimers-association-report-examines-racial](http://www.alz.org/news/2021/new-alzheimers-association-report-examines-racial)) (press release).

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Alzheimer’s Disease and Health Aging, Caring for a Person with Alzheimer’s Disease or a Related Dementia* (accessed on Oct. 20, 2021) ([www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/alzheimer.htm#:~:text=Each%20year%2C%20more%20than%2016,18.5%20billion%20hours%20of%20care](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/alzheimer.htm#:~:text=Each%20year%2C%20more%20than%2016,18.5%20billion%20hours%20of%20care)).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

cost of caring for someone with dementia is \$341,840, and 41 percent of dementia caregivers have an average yearly household income of \$50,000.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. Legislation**

H.R. 1474, the “Alzheimer’s Caregiver Support Act,” introduced by Reps. Waters (D-CA) and Smith (R-NJ), would authorize grants to health care and social service providers to support expanded training and support services for unpaid caregivers of people living with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. These grants would cover training and services including caregiver support groups, group education, and skills-training sessions.

## **II. H.R. 1667, THE “DR. LORNA BREEN HEALTH CARE PROVIDER PROTECTION ACT”**

### **A. Background**

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has compounded the stress and burnout experienced by health care workers working in an already emotionally demanding field. A recent survey from the American Medical Association of over 20,000 medical professionals found that 38 percent of respondents were experiencing anxiety and depression, and 49 percent had burnout.<sup>6</sup> Another survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Washington Post found that a majority of frontline health care workers (62 percent) say that worry or stress related to COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health.<sup>7</sup> Even so, the same survey found that only 13 percent of health care workers say that they received mental health services, and an additional 18 percent say that though they thought they needed them, they did not seek out these services, citing busy schedules, embarrassment or fear, and financial concerns.<sup>8</sup> In March of 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) which included onetime funding for grants to medical providers to promote mental health among their health professional workforce as well as for an education and awareness campaign encouraging healthy work conditions and greater use of mental health and substance use disorder services by health care professionals.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alzheimer’s.net, *The Cost of Dementia Care in 2018* (Aug. 13, 2021) ([www.alzheimers.net/the-cost-of-dementia-care](http://www.alzheimers.net/the-cost-of-dementia-care)).

<sup>6</sup> American Medical Association, *Half of health workers report burnout amid COVID-19* (July 20, 2021) ([www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/physician-health/half-health-workers-report-burnout-amid-covid-19](http://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/physician-health/half-health-workers-report-burnout-amid-covid-19)).

<sup>7</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, *KFF/The Washington Post Frontline Health Care Workers Survey* (Apr. 6, 2021) ([www.kff.org/report-section/kff-the-washington-post-frontline-health-care-workers-survey-toll-of-the-pandemic/?utm\\_campaign=KFF-2021-polling-surveys&utm\\_medium=email&\\_hsmi=2&\\_hsenc=p2ANqtz-\\_O1wzC3EysCZIKW0kCMDZpbV6oLd5xwx4CIkuyY3sw3HY\\_IWeEIYAKCkK\\_a7ODLB801Vx8g9u2oXcvko8YvTVJhgmDoQ&utm\\_content=2&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](http://www.kff.org/report-section/kff-the-washington-post-frontline-health-care-workers-survey-toll-of-the-pandemic/?utm_campaign=KFF-2021-polling-surveys&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=2&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_O1wzC3EysCZIKW0kCMDZpbV6oLd5xwx4CIkuyY3sw3HY_IWeEIYAKCkK_a7ODLB801Vx8g9u2oXcvko8YvTVJhgmDoQ&utm_content=2&utm_source=hs_email)).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Pub. L. No 117-2.

## **B. Legislation**

H.R. 1667, the “Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act,” introduced by Rep. Wild (D-PA) and 14 original cosponsors, requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to award grants for relevant mental and behavioral health training for health care students, residents, or professionals. In addition, HHS shall award grants to hospitals, medical professional associations, and other health care entities for programs to support mental health and behavioral health needs among health care providers. This legislation would also require HHS to conduct a campaign to encourage health care providers to seek support and treatment for mental and behavioral health concerns and disseminate best practices to prevent suicide and improve mental health and resiliency among health care providers. Finally, the legislation requires HHS to study, develop, and submit policy recommendations to Congress on policies to improve health care professional mental health and prevent burnout. This legislation is named for Dr. Lorna M. Breen, the medical director of the emergency department at New York-Presbyterian Allen Hospital, who died of suicide in April 2020.

## **III. H.R. 3297, THE “PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE LOAN REPAYMENT ACT OF 2021”**

### **A. Background**

Despite being underfunded and understaffed, public health departments have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 response by coordinating contract tracing efforts, interpreting public health guidance, and rolling out life-saving vaccines. Since 2008, local and state health departments have lost 20 percent of their workforce capacity.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, 175 million Americans are living in communities that experienced stagnant or reduced local health department funding in 2019, impacting over half of the U.S. population.<sup>11</sup>

### **B. Legislation**

H.R. 3297, the “Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Act of 2021,” introduced by Reps. Crow (D-CO), Burgess (R-TX), Eshoo (D-CA), and Guthrie (R-KY) would establish a student loan repayment program for public health professionals at HHS. As a condition of participation, recipients must agree to complete a period of full-time employment with a state, tribal, or local public health agency for at least three years. The legislation authorizes \$100 million for fiscal year (FY) 2021 and \$75 million for the subsequent year from FY2022-2026.

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<sup>10</sup> The National Association of County and City Health Officials, *NACCHO New Analysis: Changes in Local Health Department Workforce and Finance Capacity Since 2008* (July 10, 2020) ([www.naccho.org/blog/articles/naccho-new-analysis-changes-in-local-health-department-workforce-and-finance-capacity-since-2008](http://www.naccho.org/blog/articles/naccho-new-analysis-changes-in-local-health-department-workforce-and-finance-capacity-since-2008)).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

#### **IV. H.R. 3320, THE “ALLIED HEALTH WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ACT OF 2021”**

##### **A. Background**

Certain minority groups are significantly underrepresented in the health professional workforce.<sup>12</sup> Allied health professions in particular severely lack racial and ethnic diversity; more than 77 percent of professionals in the physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology are White, while less than five percent of these professionals are Black and less than seven percent are Hispanic.<sup>13</sup> Increasing diversity in the health workforce leads to greater patient choice and satisfaction as well as better education experience for health professions students.<sup>14</sup> A more diverse health workforce also improves access to care as minority groups disproportionately live in areas with health care provider shortages, and members of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to practice in shortage areas.<sup>15</sup>

##### **B. Legislation**

H.R. 3320, the “Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act of 2021,” introduced by Reps. Rush (D-IL) and Mullin (R-OK), would allow HHS to award grants and contracts to accredited education programs to increase diversity in the physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, audiology, and speech-language pathology professions. Grants may be used to provide scholarships or stipends and to carry out activities to support recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented groups. The legislation authorizes \$8 million for each FY for five years following enactment.

#### **V. H.R. 5583, THE “HELPING ENABLE ACCESS TO LIFESAVING SERVICES ACT” OR THE “HEALS ACT”**

##### **A. Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing mental health care needs of adults, adolescents, and children in the United States.<sup>16</sup> More than 50 percent of adults in the United

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<sup>12</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration, *Sex, Race, and Ethnic Diversity of U.S. Health Occupations (2011-2015)* (Aug. 2017) ([bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/diversity-us-health-occupations.pdf](http://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/diversity-us-health-occupations.pdf)).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Institute of Medicine, *In the Nation’s Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce* (2004) ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK216009/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK216009/)).

<sup>15</sup> Lyndonna M. Marrast, M.D., et. al., *Minority Physicians’ Role in the Care of Underserved Patients: Diversifying the Physician Workforce May Be Key in Addressing Health Disparities*, JAMA Internal Medicine (Feb. 2014) ([jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1792913](http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1792913)).

<sup>16</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *MMWR: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Prevalence of Stress and Worry, Mental Health Conditions, and Increased Substance Use*

States will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder in their lifetime and suicide is the second leading cause of death for children and young adults ages ten through 34.<sup>17</sup> In fact, leading pediatric health experts have recently declared a “national state of emergency in child and adolescent mental health.”<sup>18</sup> Similar to other health conditions, people of color “have experienced disparities in mental health and substance misuse related to access to care, psychosocial stress, and social determinants of health.”<sup>19</sup> As the need for behavioral health services increases and despite growth in the workforce field, “serious workforce shortages exist for health professionals and paraprofessionals across the United States.”<sup>20</sup> According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), there is over a four million provider shortage for behavioral health services across the country.<sup>21</sup>

## **B. Legislation**

H.R. 5583, the “HEALS Act,” introduced by Rep. Curtis (R-UT), reauthorizes several programs within HHS aimed at strengthening the behavioral health care workforce. The bill reauthorizes: the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) grants for an additional four years, from FY 2023–2026 at \$50 million per year; the HRSA Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Workforce Training Demonstration Program for an additional five years, from FY 2022–2026 at \$10 million per year; the SAMHSA Minority Fellowship Program for an additional five years, from FY 2022–2026 at \$12.669 million per year; and extends liability protections for health professional volunteers at Community Health Centers (CHC) for an additional five years, until October 1, 2026.

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*Among Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, April and May 2020* (Feb. 5, 2021) ([www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7005a3-H.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7005a3-H.pdf)).

<sup>17</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health, About Mental Health (accessed Oct. 20, 2021) ([www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm)); National Alliance for Mental Illness, Mental Health by the Numbers (accessed Oct. 20, 2021) ([www.nami.org/mhstats](http://www.nami.org/mhstats)).

<sup>18</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, *AAP-AACAP-CHA Declaration of a National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health* (accessed Oct. 21, 2021) ([www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/](http://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/)).

<sup>19</sup> See note 16.

<sup>20</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Workforce (accessed Oct. 20, 2021) ([www.samhsa.gov/workforce](http://www.samhsa.gov/workforce)).

<sup>21</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Behavioral Health Workforce Report* (accessed Oct. 20, 2021) ([annapoliscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/behavioral-health-workforce-report-SAMHSA-2.pdf](http://annapoliscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/behavioral-health-workforce-report-SAMHSA-2.pdf)).

## **VI. H.R. 5594, THE “ENHANCING THE COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKFORCE ACT”**

### **A. Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic further brought to light the inequities in the American health system. American Indian and Alaskan Native, Black, and Hispanic people have experienced disproportionate rates of illness and death due to COVID-19.<sup>22</sup> Not only are communities of color at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, but due to higher rates of underlying conditions, they are also at increased risk for experiencing serious illness.<sup>23</sup> Rural areas are also experiencing the worst of the pandemic, with rural Americans dying of COVID-19 at nearly twice the rate as those who live in urban areas.<sup>24</sup>

### **B. Legislation**

H.R. 5594, the “Enhancing the Community Health Workforce Act,” introduced by Rep. Joyce (R-PA), reauthorizes grants available through the CDC to promote positive health behaviors and outcomes at \$50 million each year from FY 2023 to 2027. These grants are aimed at improving health outcomes in historically underserved communities through the use of community health workers. For funding awarded on or after October 1, 2022, entities would see a reduction to their award equal to the amount of assistance awarded to the entity for the same or similar purpose under the ARP.

## **VII. H.R. 5602, THE “BOLSTERING INFECTIOUS OUTBREAKS PREPAREDNESS WORKFORCE ACT OF 2021” OR THE “BIO PREPAREDNESS WORKFORCE ACT OF 2021”**

### **A. Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that the United States is alarmingly vulnerable to new infectious diseases (ID). Such diseases are inevitable; since the 1970s, about 40 new infectious diseases have been discovered.<sup>25</sup> The ID physician workforce was under serious strain even before the pandemic. According to a recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*,

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<sup>22</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, *Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers* (May 11, 2021) ([www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers/](http://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers/)).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Covid is killing rural Americans at twice the rate of people in urban areas*, NBC News (Sept. 30, 2021) ([www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/covid-killing-rural-americans-twice-rate-people-urban-areas-n1280369](http://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/covid-killing-rural-americans-twice-rate-people-urban-areas-n1280369)).

<sup>25</sup> Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Emerging Infectious Diseases (accessed Oct. 20, 2021) ([www.bcm.edu/departments/molecular-virology-and-microbiology/emerging-infections-and-biodefense/emerging-infectious-diseases](http://www.bcm.edu/departments/molecular-virology-and-microbiology/emerging-infections-and-biodefense/emerging-infectious-diseases)).

208 million Americans live in areas with little or no access to an infectious diseases physician,<sup>26</sup> and the number of applicants to ID fellowship training programs declined by 21.6 percent from 2011-2016. The following years saw only modest improvements that quickly plateaued.<sup>27</sup> In 2020, only 75 percent of infectious diseases training programs were able to fill all their slots, while many other internal medicine subspecialties (cardiology, rheumatology, gastroenterology, hematology, oncology, pulmonology, and critical care) were able to fill from 96 percent to 100 percent of their training programs.<sup>28</sup> Data published by Medscape in 2020 indicate that average annual salaries for ID physicians are below all other medical specialties except pediatrics, family medicine, endocrinology and public health, (and even below the average salary for general internal medicine), although ID training and certification requires an additional two to three years of study and training.<sup>29</sup> Given that the average medical student debt is over \$200,000,<sup>30</sup> the ID specialty is financially infeasible for many students.

## **B. Legislation**

H.R. 5602, the “BIO Preparedness Workforce Act of 2021,” introduced by Reps. Trahan (D-MA) and McKinley (R-WV), establishes a new loan repayment program at HRSA with two categories of eligibility: 1) health care professionals who spend at least 50 percent of their time engaged in bio-preparedness and response activities, and 2) health care professionals who spend at least 50 percent of their time providing infectious diseases care in a shortage designation area, underserved community, or federally funded facility. A qualified individual will serve for three years, or such longer period of time as determined appropriate by the Secretary of HHS and the individual. For each year of service, a qualified individual entering a contract with the Secretary

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<sup>26</sup> Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., et. al., *Where Is the ID in COVID-19?*, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (Oct. 6, 2020) ([www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-2684](http://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M20-2684)).

<sup>27</sup> The George Washington University Health Workforce Institute and the Infectious Diseases Society of America, *The Future Supply and Demand for Infectious Disease Physicians* (Mar. 2017) ([www.idsociety.org/globalassets/idsa/policy--advocacy/current\\_topics\\_and\\_issues/workforce\\_and\\_training/background/gw-the-future-supply-and-demand-for-infectious-disease-physicians-3-17-17-final.pdf](http://www.idsociety.org/globalassets/idsa/policy--advocacy/current_topics_and_issues/workforce_and_training/background/gw-the-future-supply-and-demand-for-infectious-disease-physicians-3-17-17-final.pdf)).

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Barbara D. Alexander, M.D., M.H.S., F.I.D.S.A., President, Infectious Diseases Society of America, and Rajesh T. Gandhi, M.D., F.I.D.S.A., Chair, HIV Medicine Association, to Senator Patty Murray and Senator Richard Burr (Apr. 9, 2021) ([www.idsociety.org/contentassets/a894a52f60c3485fbdbdb076d7abdb81/idsa-hivma-help-workforce-proposals-040921.pdf](http://www.idsociety.org/contentassets/a894a52f60c3485fbdbdb076d7abdb81/idsa-hivma-help-workforce-proposals-040921.pdf)).

<sup>29</sup> *It's hard to pay off your medical school loans in this kind of a job': Doctors who can protect the world against pandemics are in short supply*, *Business Insider* (May 8, 2020) ([www.businessinsider.com/infectious-disease-specialists-short-supply-low-paid-doctors-us-2020-5](http://www.businessinsider.com/infectious-disease-specialists-short-supply-low-paid-doctors-us-2020-5)).

<sup>30</sup> Education Data Initiative, *Average Medical School Debt* (accessed Oct. 20, 2021) ([educationdata.org/average-medical-school-debt#:~:text=The%20average%20medical%20school%20debt,school%20graduates%20have%20educational%20debt](http://educationdata.org/average-medical-school-debt#:~:text=The%20average%20medical%20school%20debt,school%20graduates%20have%20educational%20debt)).

may receive up to \$50,000 in loan forgiveness. The bill authorized \$50 million for FY 2023-2027.

## **VIII. WITNESSES**

The following witnesses have been invited to testify:

**Corey Feist**

Founder

Dr. Lorna Breen Foundation

**Lisa Macon Harrison, M.P.H.**

President

National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)

**Brooks A. Keel, Ph.D.**

President

Augusta University

**Alan Levine**

Executive Chairman, President, and CEO

Ballad Health

**Jeanne Marrazzo, M.D.**

Board Member, Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA)

Infectious Disease Division Chief, University of Alabama at Birmingham

**Stephanie Monroe, J.D.**

Director, Equity and Access, UsAgainstAlzheimer's

Executive Director, AfricanAmericansAgainstAlzheimer's

**Victoria Garcia Wilburn, D.H.Sc., O.T.R., F.A.O.T.A.**

Assistant Professor, Occupational Therapy

IUPUI School of Health & Human Sciences