



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2017

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Pallone Statement at Hearing on Bipartisan Medicare Bills

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Health hearing titled, “Examining Bipartisan Legislation to Improve the Medicare Program:”*

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Today we will examine eleven bipartisan bills aimed at improving care in the Medicare program. Medicare plays a critical role in the lives of our nation’s seniors and disabled Americans, and it is so important that this Committee continue to look for ways to strengthen the program and deliver the highest quality care to beneficiaries. I commend the Chairman for holding this hearing and I look forward to working with you on these measures moving forward.

First, I’m pleased that we’ll be discussing H.R. 1148, the FAST Act, introduced by Representatives Joyce and Griffith. When it comes to stroke –every second counts. Stroke telemedicine, also known as telestroke, breaks down barriers to care and is a valuable tool for combatting our nation’s fifth leading cause of death. The FAST Act would expand coverage of telestroke services in the Medicare program so that beneficiaries can get the right treatment at the right time, no matter where they live. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Kissela today about the impact of expanding telestroke services in the Medicare program.

Additionally, I am pleased that we have a discussion draft on extending the exceptions process and targeted manual medical review for physical therapy caps. It is long past overdue for us to have a serious discussion about a permanent policy to address these caps. In MACRA, we instructed CMS to eliminate manual medical review for all claims above the \$3700 threshold, and instead put in place a targeted, less burdensome review. I understand that this process is working quite well for both beneficiaries and providers. I look forward to hearing from the American Physical Therapy Association today about how targeted medical review can be part of a long-term solution that both preserves access for beneficiaries and reduces the burden on providers.

I also look forward to hearing from the National Home Infusion Association today about H.R. 3163. Home infusion is a critically important service that allows Medicare beneficiaries to receive infusion drugs at home, rather than other more expensive and less convenient sites

of care. I support H.R. 3163 and I am glad that we have been able to work on a bipartisan basis on this important bill to ensure continued patient access to these important drugs at home.

I also look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the other six bills and the discussion draft on mobile laboratories. All of these bills aim to make meaningful changes to the Medicare program by protecting beneficiaries, reducing provider burden, improving program integrity, or delivering comprehensive primary care services to Medicare beneficiaries in the home. I look forward to learning more about these bills and working on a bipartisan basis to advance these efforts.

Finally, H.R. 849, introduced by Representatives Ruiz and Roe, would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB). This is not the first time we've considered repealing IPAB. As I've said in the past, I'm opposed to IPAB and would be in favor of abolishing it. However, unlike the past, I hope we can work in a bipartisan fashion to eliminate IPAB. It is my belief that Congress should not be ceding legislative authority to independent commissions like IPAB by allowing them to play more than an informational role. The Affordable Care Act strengthened the Medicare program and put it on the path toward incentivizing value over volume. It lengthened the life of the Medicare Trust Fund and contributed to a lower rate of growth in Medicare expenditures. It is our job as legislators to continue this work to ensure that the program remains strong for future generations—not the job of an unelected commission.

I look forward to learning more from our witnesses about all the policies up for discussion today. Thank you, I yield back the remainder of my time.

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