

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.

Markup of 19 Bills

July 15, 2021

Throughout the 117th Congress, the Health Subcommittee has been leading the charge to improve health care for all Americans. The COVID-19 pandemic has not made it easy, but I am proud we are marking up 19 bills today that have all been agreed to on a bipartisan basis. I greatly appreciate the Minority for working with us to get to this point.

We will be considering legislation that supports development of advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing technologies, provides resources and other assistance to combat the ongoing opioid and substance use epidemic, addresses social determinants of health, improves maternal health, increases access to life-saving vaccines, and avoids a devastating Medicaid fiscal cliff for Puerto Rico and the other the U.S. territories.

First, we will consider my legislation with Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Guthrie that will create a Centers of Excellence program to foster the development of advanced and continuous pharmaceutical manufacturing technology. Our bipartisan legislation will lead to a more nimble and efficient mode of drug production, by expanding opportunities for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to partner with universities across the country that are leading these efforts.

Then we will consider a series of bills that tackle the opioid epidemic by providing significant resources and training to providers, regulators, and other organizations on the ground. These proposals will help people across the country who are battling substance use amid the worst public health crisis of our lifetimes. Just yesterday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that more people died of overdoses last year than any year on record. These bills are another step in our efforts to combat this devastating epidemic.

We will also consider several bills that augment our public health data infrastructure. If passed, these proposals would increase our understanding of health inequities and the social determinants that contribute to worse health outcomes for many communities.

We will also markup multiple pieces of legislation that seek to increase access to life-saving vaccines for all Americans. During our legislative hearing on public health and vaccines, health experts estimated that millions of people across the county have missed routine vaccinations because of the barriers posed by the pandemic. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to strengthen our nation's vaccine infrastructure, address

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vaccine hesitancy, and expand access to vaccines. If we do not act to get people caught up, we will face a wave of unnecessary illness and death from diseases that are entirely preventable.

I am also pleased that we are considering a number of bills that will improve maternal health outcomes, including the Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act, introduced by Representatives Kelly and Bucshon. Addressing the nation's maternal mortality crisis has been a priority for this Committee and I am proud this markup moves forward important pieces of legislation for this purpose.

Lastly, we will take up legislation to avert a fiscal cliff and disastrous outcome for millions of American citizens who rely on Medicaid in the U.S. territories. This bipartisan agreement extends the increased funding caps and Federal Medical Assistance Percentages, or FMAP, for five years for Puerto Rico and eight years for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. I want to thank Ranking Member Rodgers for her commitment to this issue, as well as all the Representatives of the U.S. territories for their tireless advocacy on behalf of their constituents.

This would be the longest extension of increased Medicaid funding for the U.S. territories other than the extension we were able to provide in the Affordable Care Act . While I remain committed to a permanent funding solution for all of the territories, I believe this is a very strong bill worthy of bipartisan support. I look forward to continuing to work with the Ranking Member to get this bill signed into law.

I would also like to thank Chairwoman Eshoo, Ranking Member Guthrie, Ranking Member Rodgers, and all the sponsors of today's legislation for their commitment to strengthen health care for the American people.

I know that this subcommittee will continue to lead and work together to solve some of the most pressing issues facing our country.

Thank you. I yield back.