

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE DONALD G. DAVIS OF NORTH CAROLINA

Thank you, Chair McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, and all Members of this distinguished Committee for allowing me to speak on issues within the Committee's jurisdiction that matter to residents of North Carolina's First Congressional District.

Since taking office in January, health care has been my number one legislative priority, having led, co-led, or cosponsored more than 50 bills in this space.

As we sit here today, the people of eastern North Carolina are hurting, and at the root of this pain is a lack of access to health care.

To tackle these health disparities, I joined two colleagues in restarting the State Medicaid Expansion Caucus to demonstrate the overwhelming public support for basic access to health care. After more than a decade of waiting, or, in some cases, dying — 95,000 more eastern North Carolinians are eligible for lifesaving health care. As a co-chair of the State Medicaid Expansion Caucus, I will continue leading the charge in Congress to expand Medicaid across the country.

Beyond Medicaid expansion, I have championed the cause of rural hospitals. In the past decade, four rural hospitals in eastern North Carolina alone stopped operations, creating significant barriers to lifesaving medical care. Martin General is the most recent example of suspending operations in the East. While we have limited tools at our disposal, especially in communities where the payer mix skews towards Medicare and Medicaid, the Rural Emergency Hospital designation authority is a critical part of the solution. Let us remember that rural hospitals not only provide health care; they also serve as an economic engine for our communities.

As eastern North Carolinians grapple with limited access to care, the opioid epidemic continues to plague the region. To combat this crisis, I introduced bipartisan legislation with Congressman John Rutherford to stem the flow of counterfeit substances, including fentanyl, that have flooded the drug market. H.R. 4988, the Modern Authentication of Pharmaceuticals Act, will come down hard on counterfeit controlled substances by requiring on-dose identifiers to guarantee the legitimacy of pharmaceuticals. I urge the Committee to take up this legislation and put a dent in the fentanyl crisis.

Just as we emphasize the importance of physical health, mental health is a critical part of children's overall health and well-being. As a father of three, it pains me to say that our children are in crisis, given the record numbers of teenagers attempting and committing suicide. To tackle this head-on, I will soon introduce a bipartisan bill in the coming weeks to combat algorithms on social media platforms that amplify the most graphic, problematic content. As the Committee takes up the American Data Privacy Protection Act, I urge you to consider incorporating this bill as a common-sense solution for our kids.

On the subject of improving the well-being of eastern North Carolinians, broadband access is top of mind. Many rural and agricultural communities across North Carolina's First Congressional District lack broadband access. It has been excruciating to close gaps in access because the Federal Communications Commission's broadband maps lack precision and accuracy. I urge this Committee to ensure the FCC is making real and tangible progress in providing the public with

more accurate and realistic maps. We need these maps to ensure federal dollars reach underserved communities.

Another way to support rural communities is through stable and reliable energy grid systems. People in eastern North Carolina expect their lights, stoves, and cooling systems to work. These needs are not a given because eastern North Carolina's grid system is much older, potentially resulting in higher utility costs for families, a greater chance of system failure due to extreme weather events, as well as increased risks of cyber threats. I ask this Committee to prioritize rural energy grid systems.

To ensure transparency and good use of taxpayer dollars, I co-led another bipartisan bill with Congresswoman Lisa McClain to ban government funding for animal testing in adversarial nations, including Russia, China, and Iran. The Accountability in Foreign Animal Research (AFAR) Act currently enjoys bipartisan support from members of this Committee, and key House Appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2024 include language closely mirroring the bill. If we learned anything from the pandemic, it is that foreign animal laboratories can be a breeding ground for the most lethal pathogens.

I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee today on the critical issues impacting my constituents, and I look forward to continued partnership with Members on both sides of the aisle.

I yield back.