

Written Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern (MA-02)
Testimony before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce
September 18, 2023

Chair Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone—

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on a few of my priorities before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Later this year I plan to re-introduce the Medical Nutrition Equity Act, a bill that expands coverage under Medicare, Medicaid, other specified federal health care programs, and private health insurance to include food, vitamins, and individual amino acids that are medically necessary for the management of certain digestive and metabolic disorders and conditions. This bipartisan and bicameral bill is narrowly written to focus on individuals for whom medically necessary nutrition is the treatment for their diseases.

For many of the covered disorders, the legislation simply establishes treatment parity. For example, medically necessary nutrition is routinely denied by insurance companies for the management of Crohn's disease, while more costly treatments that put people at risk of medical complications are approved. Approximately 2,000 infants every year are diagnosed with an inherited metabolic disorder because all states have mandated testing for these disorders and yet, treatment of these disorders goes uncovered for far too many.

In December 2016, Congress passed improved coverage for medical nutrition for military families enrolled in TRICARE as a part of the National Defense Authorization Act. Our bill expands coverage to include patients covered under Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicare, the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program, and private insurance. I respectfully urge you to include the Medical Nutrition Equity Act in a hearing so that the House may pass this important legislation during the 118th Congress.

Additionally, I'd like to bring to your attention H.R. 4034, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide coverage for wigs as durable medical equipment under the Medicare program, which I re-introduced June 12, 2023, with Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D-MA). Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) has also introduced a companion bill in the Senate, S. 1922.

Many patients living with medical hair loss suffer from a variety of diseases, including cancer, or as a result of medically necessary treatment. Additionally, alopecia areata, an autoimmune skin disease with no known cause or cure that causes hair loss, affects approximately 6.8 million Americans. Our bill would increase access to cranial prosthetics for patients with medical hair loss, including those with cancer and alopecia areata. This bill is a simple change that will grant those in need access to this important treatment option.

I have proudly been the lead sponsor of this bill since the 115th Congress. I respectfully urge you to consider H.R. 4034 before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce so that the House may pass this bill during the 118th Congress.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and this opportunity to testify.