

CONGRESSMAN JOE NEGUSE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
MEMBERS DAY TESTIMONY
September 18, 2023

Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Committee's upcoming Member Day Hearing. As you continue your work during the 118th Congress, I request that you consider the following legislation to allow states more flexibility to manage their Medicaid and Child Health Plans, ensure private insurance companies cover osseointegrated hearing devices, incentivize licensure portability for mental health providers, and improve the nation's recycling and composting infrastructure.

Throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency children and eligible individuals enrolled in Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) had continuous eligibility, meaning that over the course of the pandemic they have not been redetermined or disenrolled from critical coverage plans. When the public health emergency ended on May 11, 2023, many of these individuals became at risk of losing their health care coverage. **H.R. 1316, the Save Children's Coverage Act** circumvents the administratively burdensome federal waiver processes and authorizes continuous eligibility enrollment programs in Standard State Plan Amendment (SPA) options—securing continued access to health care coverage for over 250,000 kids in the state of Colorado alone.

Children's health needs are unique. In the earliest years of their lives, they are rapidly developing. That development sets the foundation for the rest of their lives. If they are not consistently getting periodic, age-appropriate care, that foundation is weakened, potentially leading to costlier physical and behavioral health issues down the line. A prerequisite to ensuring children are receiving care that helps their early development is to ensure they have a consistent source of health coverage. Without a more streamlined option for states to pursue, children will be more likely to fall through the cracks and lose health coverage during the period when they need it the most.

Too many of our kids are struggling because their families can't afford the care they need. Ally, a thirteen-year-old from Colorado and one of my constituents, was born without a right ear or hearing canal and therefore requires the use of a bone anchored hearing aid ("BAHA") which is one form of osseointegrated device ("OIDs"). While OIDs, which include Bone Anchored Hearing Aids (BAHAs) and Cochlear Implants, are medically necessary and address unique corrective requirements specific to varying forms of hearing loss, they are consistently denied coverage by private insurance companies, despite the critical and life-changing support these devices provide to countless individuals.

H.R. 2439, Ally's Act, is bipartisan, bicameral legislation that would require private insurance companies to cover these critical and life-altering devices for children and adults from birth to age 64. The bill also requires the coverage of services, upgrades, surgery, and associated costs that come along with these devices at the determination of medical necessity. For Ally and for countless Americans across this nation, specialized hearing devices are critical for communicating. For insurance companies to deny

coverage for these essential devices is unconscionable. I urge the committee to move forward with this legislation to expand critical care for so many with hearing loss.

I would also like to mention another piece of bipartisan, bicameral legislation: **H.R.2438, the Compacts, Access, and Responsible Expansion (CARE) for Mental Health Professionals Act**. In addition to expanding critical coverage, Congress must do everything in our power to address the current healthcare workforce shortages. Right now, over 120 million Americans live in areas with a shortage of mental health professionals. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) estimates that by 2025, there will be a shortage of over 250,000 mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, clinical and school psychologists, and school counselors. While there is no single solution to the current workforce crisis, allowing providers to practice across multiple states and avoid duplicative registration processes stands to have a tremendous positive impact.

The CARE for Mental Health Professionals Act would incentivize interstate medical health provider networks, allowing providers to practice across multiple states and more readily reach rural communities. By addressing provider shortages, the bill would help expand mental health services for the 60 million Americans living in rural communities.

Finally, I would like the Committee to consider my bipartisan legislation: **H.R. 4040, The Recycling and Composting Accountability Act (RCAA)**. I introduced this bill with Reps. Burchett and Foster, with companion legislation led by Senators Carper and Capito. Most Americans want to recycle their waste rather than see it end up in landfills or on our lands and in our waters, yet the United States only has a national recycling rate of 32%.

The RCAA is bipartisan legislation that shares broad support, and would fill critical information gaps to strengthen our recycling and composting infrastructure. The bill aims to improve data and reporting on current recycling and composting infrastructure in the United States, and establish voluntary guidelines that detail best practices to enhance recycling and composting efforts. RCAA passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee earlier this year on unanimous consent, and in the 117th Congress, it passed the Senate on Unanimous Consent as well. I urge the Committee to consider this legislation to address this information gap, and work towards improving our nation's recycling and composting systems.

In closing, thank you Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding my priorities within the Committee's jurisdiction. I look forward to working with the committee on these issues and many more.

Sincerely,

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress