

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Hearing on “Combatting Existing and Emerging Illicit Drug Threats”

February 6, 2025

Thank you for holding this hearing today, Mr. Chairman.

I am honored to serve as the ranking member on this subcommittee.

I have spent my entire career in Congress on this committee and many of my proudest legislative achievements center around health policy.

I look forward to working with you and all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance strong, bipartisan solutions to the issues we face.

Regarding their health care, the American people across the political spectrum want the same things.

We want an affordable and effective health care system that puts patients first.

We want science to guide medical decision-making and to progress so that a terminal illness today is a curable one tomorrow.

And, of course, we want to be safe from dangerous drugs like fentanyl.

But developments in the past few weeks have not been encouraging.

Donald Trump kicked off his term with actions that led to a day-long freeze of Medicaid funds for every one of our states, leaving state Medicaid programs to wonder if they were going to be able to pay doctors, hospitals, and substance use disorder programs.

In response to Donald Trump’s executive orders, CDC removed from its website guidance that doctors rely on to treat patients every day and data researchers use to improve public health.

This included guidance on sexually transmitted infections and vaccine recommendations.

Clinical guidance on birth control and really any resource at all for LGBTQ people are, as of yesterday, still missing.

NIH grantmaking for critical biomedical research is at a dead stop with no end in sight.

And as of yesterday afternoon, there is a stop on funds from going to my state’s office of rural health – funds to improve rural health care quality.

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And now, a 23-year-old SpaceX intern has been given access to systems containing sensitive information about Medicare and Medicaid.

My constituents are terrified of what Elon Musk and his lawless DOGE are going to do with that access.

Each of these actions disregards Congress and the law.

Yet, as Donald Trump ground NIH to a halt and disrupted funding for safety net health care, only Democrats have spoken up.

Are Republicans scared of Donald Trump? Or do they agree with this lawless assault on science and medicine?

The Constitution obliges the President to faithfully execute the laws that Congress creates.

Donald Trump is clearly not doing that, and it is Congress's duty to hold him to account.

The founders envisioned the checks and balances in our Constitution as necessary to curb abuses in the government.

"Ambition must be made to counteract ambition," James Madison famously wrote, and that the government must be obliged to control itself.

Democrats are clamoring to assert Congress's authority.

It is shameful that Republicans have allowed Congress, the first branch of government and the voice of the people, to be in this diminished state and to allow the executive branch to ignore the law.

Let me assure you, our constituents are watching what is happening, and they are not happy.

Amidst this lawlessness, Republicans are busy pursuing an unpopular and dangerous agenda to take health care coverage away from hardworking Americans.

To pay for Donald Trump's tax cuts for his billionaire friends, Republicans are pursuing Medicaid cuts, which more than seven in ten Americans oppose.

These cuts could total over two trillion dollars to the country's biggest payer for behavioral health services.

That is a quarter of Medicaid spending in the next decade.

What are you going to cut?

Is it going to be the 40 percent of new moms whose deliveries are covered by Medicaid? The half of medically complex children who rely on the program? Or the families striving to make ends meet who depend on Medicaid to keep them healthy and working?

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I hope my Republican friends will come to their senses.

Once they do, they will find an earnest and constructive partner in me.

But until then, I and every Democratic member of this committee will work tirelessly to defeat these damaging proposals to take health coverage away from hardworking Americans.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I wish that the majority was interested in using your expertise to find strong bipartisan solutions rather than bending to the whims of billionaires.