

Testimony of Rep. Brittany Pettersen (CO-07)
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Member Day Hearing
December 12, 2025

Chairman Brett Guthrie, Ranking Member Frank Pallone, and Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee:

As the House Energy and Commerce Committee continues its work this Congress, this committee has an opportunity to lower costs for working families, expand access to high quality healthcare, and protect our environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to communicate my priorities to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and strongly urge the Committee to address our country's most pressing needs including protecting Medicaid, addressing the opioid overdose epidemic, addressing the climate crisis, and protecting our energy security.

Protecting Medicaid

Republicans' "One Big Beautiful Bill" includes devastating cuts to Medicaid that will result in an estimated 11.8 million Americans losing coverage, including over 377,000 people in my home state of Colorado. These cuts will shutter rural hospitals, flood our emergency rooms, and result in people losing access to the care they need to survive, all to fund tax breaks for billionaires.

This Committee should reverse these cuts and rebuild the program that families across the nation rely on. The reality is that when people lose health insurance coverage, they don't stop needing health care. Kids will still need to see their pediatrician, cancer patients will still need chemo, and individuals with renal diseases will still need dialysis. But when they don't have health insurance coverage, they may delay care until it is dire, showing up in our emergency departments. Uncompensated costs of the emergency room visits do not disappear – they are borne by everyone else, driving up health costs for all of us.

The "One Big Beautiful Bill" also includes a provision that has the potential to impact Section 1115 waivers – a key tool that state governments use to ensure Medicaid can cover vital services like inpatient and residential substance use disorder treatment. In June, I led an amendment that received bipartisan support that would have repealed this provision. Unfortunately, this amendment nearly passed with a vote of 213-213, and it is crucial that we repeal this provision to ensure that states have access to the tools so states can tailor their Medicaid programs to fit their needs.

Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

I have seen first-hand the impact of the opioid crisis in my fight to save my mom's life during a 30-year long struggle with addiction. When I was just six years old, my mom sustained a back injury and was over-prescribed opioids to manage her pain. Like so many Americans, this fueled a decades long addiction that eventually led to her using heroin and fentanyl. In one year alone, my mom overdosed more than 20 times and even overdosed 3 times in a single day.

But she is one of the lucky ones. After 30 years of struggling, I was finally able to get my mom the treatment she needed, and she just celebrated her eighth year in recovery. She's an example of what's possible when people struggling with substance use disorders have access to the resources and support they need. Unfortunately, far too many people in our country aren't as lucky, and the stigma surrounding addiction creates the greatest barrier to addressing this public health epidemic.

For the first time since 2018, the number of Americans dying of a drug overdose declined over a one-year period. From October 2023 to September 2024, overdose deaths were reduced by 24%, from 114,000 deaths to 87,000 deaths. Unfortunately, the Trump administration's actions over the last year threaten to unravel this progress. Reports indicate the administration has illegally fired Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) employees, effectively cutting the agency's workforce to less than half of what it was at the start of the 2025. Additionally, more than \$1.7 billion in block grants to state health departments and roughly \$350 million in addiction and overdose prevention funding were eliminated. The consequences of these reckless actions are dire and American lives hang in the balance. Overdose deaths continue to be the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18-44. We cannot afford to turn back the clock on the progress that evidence-based federal programs have made.

Instead, we must rebuild and reinvest in SAMHSA, ensure adequate and consistent reimbursement and coverage for substance use disorder treatment for private and public insurers so that every individual struggling with addiction has access to the critical medical care they need, expand federal incentives to increase the workforce trained in addiction care, expand access to naloxone, and increase federal investments to support the continuum of care needed in prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction to address the opioid and overdose epidemic. I look forward to working alongside the Committee to urgently address the opioid epidemic.

Addressing the Climate Crisis and Energy Security

In addition, addressing the climate crisis and energy security should be a top priority for the Committee. Coloradans are experiencing the devastating effects of the climate crisis firsthand – from the threats to our water supply to our now year-round wildfire season. We understand how critical it is to tackle this issue head-on.

Colorado has been a leader in investing in our country's independent and affordable energy future. Through investments in clean energy, manufacturing, and the responsible development of all energy sources, we are growing the next generation of talent and business that will assure our supply chains for materials critical to developing energy technologies. These investments have bolstered our economy, created stable, good-paying jobs, and attracted top talent to Colorado for further research and technology development.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has decided to cut the historic investments made through the *Inflation Reduction Act* and the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* by phasing out clean energy tax credits — including ones that directly lower energy costs for consumers — and rolling back funding for Department of Energy projects that were already well underway. On top of this, they have illegally fired staff and reorganized federal agencies, disrupting programs that make energy more affordable, deploy investments in clean energy, and support thousands of jobs. These attacks will cause irreparable harm to our climate, our economy, and a secure energy future. As a mom of two kids, I know that there is nothing more important than addressing our energy needs and ensuring a robust energy supply to keep costs low and invest in our future.