

**E&C Member Day Hearing**  
**The Honorable Maxine Dexter (OR03)**

Thank you, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone, and members of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this Member Day hearing and to highlight priorities where I believe we can find bipartisan solutions to help our communities thrive—not just survive.

My name is Maxine Dexter. I am a mother, a physician, and the proud Representative of Oregon's Third Congressional District.

Before coming to Congress, I spent 20 years caring for patients who struggled every single day just to breathe. I have seen firsthand how smoke, dust, and pollution ravage our lungs and steal years of healthy life.

In the exam room, my patients were never Democrats or Republicans. They were parents, children, workers, neighbors, and, above all, people who deserved a real chance to live a healthy life.

Our federal government has not lived up to its responsibility to protect them. To give them this chance.

This Committee—this Institution—can change that.

Outdoor air quality is worsening with increasing wildfires, deregulation of tailpipes and industry, and is leading to real, measurable harm to our health and our economy. It is egregious that this administration is stepping back from protecting our air, both outdoors and equally importantly, indoors.

Since arriving in Congress, I have been working on solutions to address these challenges.

Drawing on the stories of my patients who were harmed by wildfire smoke—and in collaboration with wonderful staff from this Committee—I am developing a bill to establish a grant program to ensure public health authorities have the resources they need to respond during smoke events.

Our physicians, nurses, and frontline health workers deserve stronger support—and our communities deserve timely and effective public health protection.

This policy is grounded in recommendations from the bipartisan Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission report. Protecting the health of our communities should never be a partisan issue.

But addressing wildfire smoke and outdoor pollution are only part of the challenge. The next frontier in this space is indoor air quality.

This year, I had the privilege of attending an event at the UN General Assembly on Healthy Indoor Air and the message was clear: when we prioritize the air in the places where we live, work, and learn, everyone benefits.

We already have broad agreement around policies that would help. Better ventilation standards, stronger air quality

monitoring, and clear guidance for schools and workplaces on how to keep our people safe.

As we look ahead, we have real opportunity to build on the strong foundation laid by the Clean Air Act.

The Clean Air Act passed with overwhelming bipartisan support because Members on both sides of the aisle understood that clean air is essential to life and health.

We should be thinking about how we strengthen and modernize these protections that have saved so many lives, and I hope to be your partner in that work.

As the only pulmonologist in Congress, I have unique perspective to offer on air quality issues, and—as a physician—I also know that our larger healthcare system is at a crisis point that cannot go unaddressed.

The U.S. spends more on healthcare than peer countries, but U.S. life expectancy is below that of its peer nations. This is due, in large part, to our failure to incentivize keeping people healthy in our system.

Right now, the way we pay for care rewards volume—how many procedures or tests we perform—not the actual value provided by our healthcare professionals.

We need a system that pays physicians for quality and outcomes. It's about putting doctors back in the driver's seat and paying them to keep people healthy, not just to treat them when

they're sick. And it means stripping away the administrative burden that prevents them from delivering the care they know the patient in front of them needs.

In this pursuit, we must focus on primary care and the essential preventative services it encompasses. These services are our first line of defense in keeping people healthy—yet they are chronically undervalued and—in some instances—unreimbursed entirely. I look forward to continued work with those on this Committee to better support and improve pay for high-quality primary care.

As a working-class kid who was the first in my family to graduate college—and certainly from medical school—I also know that we have to be investing in foundational programs—like the National Health Service Corps—that make medical school a possibility for kids like me, while bringing critically needed primary care providers to our most underserved communities.

I look forward to continued collaboration with this Committee to secure increased, multi-year funding for this program while giving it the tools it needs to be a truly competitive option for students.

Overlaying all of this is the need to address the most pressing question in front of us today—how to make healthcare affordable for American families.

I am proud to support Congresswoman Lauren Underwood's efforts to extend the enhanced ACA premium tax credits and

ensure that working families in Oregon—and across the country—are not forced to make the impossible choice between keeping their health insurance and putting food on the table or keeping a roof over their head.

My sincere hope is that we will come together—as a body—to save families from this unnecessary pain. And—when we have—I hope that we can turn our eyes to what lies ahead.

Together, we have to get the middlemen out of healthcare, make independent practice sustainable again, and put the excess money in our healthcare system into making care affordable for hard-working families desperate for relief.

I believe we have the opportunity to boldly reimagine how healthcare works. I look forward to working with each of you on long-term, durable change that ensures that every American gets access to the healthcare they deserve.

I am grateful for your time today.

Thank you, and I yield back.