Statement of Kim Wezik, MPH

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Before the House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Health

2123 Rayburn House Office Building

U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC

Tuesday, April 1, 2024 – 10:15 a.m.

Summary

- On behalf of the Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition, Ms. Wezik offers the patient perspective on reauthorizing the Over-the-Counter Monograph User Fee Act (OMUFA).
- Ms. Wezik emphasizes the preventable nature of skin cancer and the need for access to safe and effective sunscreens. Further, she notes that America is behind in approving new sunscreen ingredients, with the last approval in the 1990s.
- Ms. Wezik details the public health risk and cost of skin cancer as the most common cancer in the US, primarily caused by sun exposure. She reports that the US accounts for one-third of global skin cancer diagnoses, with over 5 million Americans treated annually at a cost of over $8 billion.
- Ms. Wezik recommends reforms in the OMUFA reauthorization to bring new, safe, and effective skin cancer prevention products to market. She advocates for alternatives to the FDA's Maximum Usage Trial (MuST) test and animal testing.
- Ms. Wezik urges Congress to address these concerns in the OMUFA reauthorization to prevent unnecessary skin cancer diagnoses and deaths. She offers to serve as a resource for the committee.

Introduction

Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone, Subcommittee Chairman Carter, and Subcommittee Ranking Member DeGette, thank you for inviting me to offer my perspective on the first reauthorization of the Over-the-Counter Monograph User Fee Act or "OMUFA." My name is Kim Wezik and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Melanoma Research Foundation, the largest independent organization devoted to melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. I am here this morning to testify on behalf of the Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition, which is a multistakeholder coalition dedicated to helping prevent skin cancer and improving public health by ensuring Americans have access to safe and effective sunscreens and evidence-based education on sun-safe practices.

Statement

I hope to bring the patient perspective to this Committee's deliberations on the importance of reauthorizing OMUFA and using this bill to turn the tide on the scourge of skin cancer. I have the privilege and challenge of supporting individuals whose lives have been upended by a skin cancer diagnosis either for themselves or their loved ones. This is a disease that disfigures, kills, and financially exhausts real people. It is also largely preventable. Many of the patients I serve share with me how they missed the opportunity to protect their skin in their youth, before many of us were even aware of the deadly effects of ultraviolet exposure over a lifetime. They are steadfast in their interest to prevent other Americans from getting a melanoma diagnosis and they are deeply concerned about the lack of action by the federal government to ensure Americans have access to over-the-counter products available around the rest of the world to prevent skin

cancer. The last time the United States approved a new over-the-counter sunscreen active ingredient was the 1990s – meaning that we are generations behind the rest of the world – and that is unacceptable.

Risk of Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States and unlike many cancers whose origin is unknown or complex, we know that sun exposure is the primary cause of skin cancer. That means that skin cancer is preventable with access to the appropriate skin cancer prevention products, like sunscreen, and techniques, like sun-safe behaviors. However, according to the World Cancer Research Fund, the United States represents approximately one-third of all global skin cancer diagnoses. Over 5 million Americans are treated for skin cancer each year at a cost of over $8 billion, according to the Surgeon General. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, the estimated number of new melanoma cases diagnosed in 2025 are projected to increase by 5.9 percent.

The Solution

A future where US skin cancer rates continue to outpace the rest of the world does not have to be the future our families live in. With some commonsense reforms that we recommend for inclusion in the OMUFA reauthorization, the PASS Coalition hopes we can bring new safe and effective skin cancer prevention products to market in a timely way.

In 2012, the PASS Coalition came together in a bipartisan effort to protect Americans from skin cancer. In 2014, this Committee passed the Sunscreen Innovation Act by a vote

of 46-0, the Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent, and the President signed the bill into law. We hoped that legislation would usher in a new era of skin cancer prevention, streamlining the sunscreen filter approval process and increasing the number of filters available in the US for a variety of skin textures, tones, and conditions.

Unfortunately, over a decade later, no new filters have been approved in the US, limiting Americans' choice to under 10 UV filters, while there are over 30 UV filters approved globally. We find ourselves today at risk of not just stymied progress, but in a situation where the FDA has called into question the existing sunscreen filters currently on the market. The current challenges stem from two primary issues: the first is the FDA's use of a relatively obscure testing method for sunscreens not used in any other country – called the Maximum Usage Trial (MuST) test – and the second issue is the insistence on animal testing on sunscreens – which is banned in most other developed nations. The PASS Coalition would like to work with this Committee to ensure that the OMUFA reauthorization addresses these challenges – not by reducing the safety and effectiveness of sunscreens – but by ensuring that the FDA considers testing alternatives to the MuST trial and animal testing.

Conclusion

The American people rely on Congress and the Administration to keep us safe but a failure to approve new sunscreen filters leaves us vulnerable to unnecessary skin cancer diagnoses and deaths. Other countries around the world have achieved this balance. We urge Congress to address these concerns in the OMUFA reauthorization and appreciate the opportunity to serve as a resource for this committee. I look forward to your questions.