

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Hearing on “Healthier America: Legislative Proposals on the Regulation and Oversight of Food”

April 29, 2026

Today we will consider several bills that build on Congress’ work to ensure the health and safety of the U.S. food supply. I’m proud of the proposals my colleagues on this side of the aisle have worked on for years to strengthen labeling requirements, close the so-called “GRAS” loophole that allows companies to add substances to foods without FDA approval, and get toxic chemicals out of the domestic food supply.

You won’t hear me say this very often, but Secretary Kennedy is right when he says that nutrition is important for overall health, and that the government “does not know how many ingredients there are in American food.”

Americans deserve peace of mind—when they’re shopping at the grocery store, preparing their kids’ lunches, or purchasing infant formula for their newborn—that the food they and their family eat is free of toxins or contaminants.

They deserve the ease of reading food labels free of misleading terms to find out whether a product is right for them. But right now, the onus for deciphering which foods are healthy and avoiding harmful substances falls overwhelmingly on the consumer.

This should be why we have an FDA—so that Americans all across the country have the information they need to make healthy choices.

But before we can begin to solve the problem, we need to understand the problem. We must, first and foremost, ensure FDA fully understands exactly what’s in our food, and which substances are harmful. That means unleashing all possible resources for research to investigate the most complex challenges facing our food system:

How have ultra-processed foods impacted our nation’s health? What is the relationship between nutrition and certain health products, including GLP-1 drugs for weight loss? And which harmful substances currently in the domestic food supply are we missing in our regulation of food additives?

I believe I can speak for the Democrats here today when I say that we are ready to work with anyone on these food priorities and more. But Republican policies and inaction are making it harder for families to afford food, harder for science to prevail over industry interests, and harder for FDA to do its job.

They must move on from this if we are to pursue durable solutions to tough nutrition problems rather than make gestures and apply band-aids.

This hearing is being held in the shadow of Republicans' Big Bad Bill, which made the largest cut to nutrition assistance in our nation's history.

Right now, across the country, three million people have lost SNAP benefits since passage of this bill, and can't even afford food or infant formula in the first place. Because yes, healthy food is better than unhealthy food, but any food is better than no food at all.

Republicans must also face the damage their ally Elon Musk and his team of DOGE children did to the FDA's workforce. An agency down 14 percent in staffing since 2024 simply can't do the investigative, scientific work necessary to hold mega-corporations to account and prevent foodborne illnesses before they happen.

My friends, we cannot possibly improve nutrition and food safety while undermining trust in science and the field of public health—the workforce and surveillance systems that keep us protected right now.

And finally, Secretary Kennedy should stop touting food reform he hasn't actually made. On March 23, the Secretary went on a podcast and claimed "We've changed the GRAS loophole so that we've closed it... So the new ingredients have to show safety studies."

That's simply untrue—the Secretary has not closed the loophole, and if he actually wanted to, he could work with us to make that a reality.

The sheer number of bills we're considering today—a backlog of twenty-eight in total—should speak for itself: Progress to ensure the safety of our nation's food supply is long overdue, and I think—I hope—there is broad interest on both sides of the aisle in tackling it.