

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery of Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Legislative Proposals to Support Patient Access to Medicare Services”

January 8, 2026

Today, Committee Republicans are holding a hearing on Medicare to supposedly strengthen the program and enhance access to care. Yet Congressional Republicans have spent the last year decimating our health care system, cutting more than \$1 trillion from the Medicaid program. The biggest cuts in this country’s history. All to fund giant tax cuts for big corporations and billionaires.

At the same time, Republicans refused to extend the Affordable Care Act’s enhanced premium tax credits that help low and middle-income Americans afford their health care coverage. Last year, Democrats repeatedly pressed Republicans to take action, but they refused, and so the tax credits expired at the end of the 2025. Now, here we are, on January 8th, with insurance premiums skyrocketing by two, three, and even four times for 24 million Americans.

This is a major failure of leadership to address the affordability crisis. In fact, it is such a failure that even members of their own party have joined Democrats in forcing a vote on the House floor to extend the tax credits through the discharge petition we are voting on this week.

Rather than addressing the health care affordability crisis that seniors and all Americans are facing, Republicans are holding this hearing on Medicare bills that will mostly raise payment rates for certain classes of providers in Medicare. Some of these bills, like the RESULTS Act and the Preserving Patient Access to Home Infusion Act, address known payment issues in the Medicare program that need to be fixed. While I support these efforts, I also believe that fixing minor payment issues in Medicare does nothing to fix the broader crisis Americans are facing in paying for health care and their rising cost of living across the board.

The failure to extend the enhanced premium tax credits are particularly harmful to older Americans preparing for retirement. Over half of all enrollees who are losing all support to purchase ACA coverage are between the ages of 50 and 64. Take, for example, a 60-year-old couple in Texas with a household income of \$85,000—they rang in the New Year facing a more than \$26,000 premium increase, just to keep their health care. Undoubtedly, older Americans like them will either go without coverage, or they will purchase worse coverage that leaves them on the hook for thousands of dollars of medical costs when they get sick or need routine medical care. Without these enhanced tax credits, they will become less healthy and face the possibility of financial ruin.

The failure to extend these tax credits is compounded by the devastating cuts in the Big Ugly Bill that rips health care away from 15 million Americans, increases out-of-pocket costs for millions of Americans, and is already forcing hospitals, maternity care units, and clinics across the country to close their doors and cut services. The Big Ugly Bill even directly attacks seniors and people with disabilities who rely on Medicare. The Republican law makes it harder to enroll in coverage through programs like the Medicare Savings Programs that make it possible for seniors struggling to afford health care costs to pay for their prescriptions and doctor’s visits.

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We must do better for the American people. Fortunately, today, we can support an extension of the premium tax credits by passing Leader Jeffries' discharge petition. If Republicans are serious about making health care more affordable and ensuring access to care, they will support the discharge petition.

With that said, I support some of the bills we will discuss today, including H.R. 5243, led by Representative McClellan, H.R. 6210, led by Representative Matsui, and H.R. 6361, led by Representative Landsman. Representative Landsman's bill would prohibit the Trump Administration from implementing its so-called WISeR model, which would impose prior authorization in traditional Medicare by allowing for-profit companies to use AI to perform prior authorization reviews and then give them a cut of the savings if care is denied. This model threatens beneficiaries' access to timely and necessary medical care, and that's why I support this legislation to halt it and any future model that impose these types of coverage restrictions on seniors who rely on traditional Medicare to get the care they need. They don't need to face even more barriers to care.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.