

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Markup of 6 Bills, Full Committee

April 29, 2025

Today, Committee Republicans are bringing up six health bills that we were supposed to markup earlier this month. Republicans continue to schedule committee markups as if these are normal times, but they're anything but normal. The daily chaos and illegal activity that we're seeing from the Trump Administration is not business as usual. And yet, Committee Republicans are looking to move the Support Act today while the Trump Administration is simultaneously dismantling the very agency that is responsible for supporting substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery.

A few weeks ago, the Trump Administration fired hundreds of staff across the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA. The Administration refuses to tell us exactly how many people were fired, but we know that key senior officials, including directors of the Center for Mental Health Services, the Center for Substance Use Prevention, and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment were reportedly terminated.

The Administration is eliminating entire offices, including the offices responsible for collecting data on mental health and substance use and helping people locate treatment services. By eliminating these offices, the Administration is making it harder for people seeking treatment to find care. And the Trump Administration is also taking back essential funding that states rely on for mental health and substance use programs through block grants.

This committee has taken a lot of bipartisan action over the last decade to combat the drug overdose crisis, but it's deeply disappointing to watch as Republicans silently stand by as the Trump Administration slashes \$1 billion in mental health and substance use funding. These dollars were already promised to states, and rescinding them arbitrarily will wreak havoc on their efforts to address the overdose crisis.

Now, some states will not be able to fill the funding gap. Providers will go unpaid and Americans will suffer. And yet, this does not seem to matter to the Trump Administration or to congressional Republicans. So let me be clear, these funding decisions will have disastrous and deadly consequences on the millions of Americans impacted by substance use disorder. And to make matters worse, a leaked internal budget proposal showed that the Trump Administration intends to eliminate eight of the programs that the Support Act reauthorized.

This includes programs to train first responders who respond to opioid overdose calls, provide residential treatment to pregnant and postpartum women, and support people in long term recovery, among others. So, again, it's Congress's job to ensure that the Department of

Health and Human Services and SAMHSA can continue their critical work and that authorized programs are not being arbitrarily and illegally slashed.

The Support Act will authorize important programs to address substance use, but I can't, frankly, Mr. Chairman, I can't support the re-authorization of the Support Act because I have no confidence that my Republican colleagues will actually stand up to President Trump and prevent him from taking additional illegal actions that undermine the Support Act. To date, Committee Republicans have not conducted any oversight of this Administration, and that's a glaring dereliction of their duty, in my opinion.

And it's long past time for Republicans to begin conducting the oversight necessary to ensure that these programs are faithfully implemented. Once again, congressional Republicans are showing that they're willing to overlook just about anything, including creating chaos across the federal government and decimating programs they claim to care about in order to appease this unhinged Administration. Even worse, reports suggest that my Republican colleagues want to pass a bill to codify these cuts.

Republicans are literally turning their backs on the American people while communities continue to battle the opioid epidemic to fund tax cuts—all this, obviously, to fund tax cuts for billionaires. And so my Republican colleagues are also moving the Support Act while simultaneously undertaking massive efforts to gut Medicaid to pay for tax breaks for billionaires and big corporations. Medicaid is the single largest payer in the country for behavioral health services, covering 40% of all Americans with opioid use disorder.

The cuts being proposed will leave billions of Americans with substance use disorder without access to lifesaving care and so many other Americans doing their best to get by with very little. So I believe if my Republican colleagues want to actually support substance use disorder response efforts, they will stop all efforts to cut Medicaid. We'll see what happens, Mr. Chairman, but in any case, I can't support the reauthorization of the Support Act for all these reasons.

And I yield back the balance of my time.