

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

Markup of 44 Bills, Full Committee

December 5, 2023

Today, the full Committee is marking up 44 bills.

We will mark up seven energy bills, including a package of bipartisan nuclear bills that is being led by Energy Subcommittee Ranking Member DeGette and Chairman Duncan. The package is comprised of 11 nuclear energy bills we moved through the Energy Subcommittee in October. It will make it easier for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to process an anticipated wave of forthcoming applications for new advanced reactor designs over the next decade. We will also move Representative Latta's bipartisan legislation establishing a program at the Department of Energy (DOE) to build out domestic nuclear fuel cycle capabilities.

Unfortunately, that's where the bipartisanship ends in the energy area. Republicans are putting forth four partisan bills on energy efficiency and grid reliability. These bills are designed to limit DOE's ability to issue energy efficiency standards that help lower energy bills for American families and reduce emissions. Gutting energy efficiency standards defies logic and undermines our efforts to combat the worsening climate crisis.

We will also consider Chair Rodgers's hydropower bill. At the Subcommittee markup, I voiced my concerns with this bill. Since that time, the Republican majority has engaged in good faith negotiations, but there are still several unresolved issues that make it difficult for me to support this bill. If the majority wants a broad bipartisan bill, we need more time to work out those issues.

I'm pleased that we are also considering several bills marked up by the Innovation, Data, and Commerce Subcommittee championed by Democratic members that empower consumers, strengthen our economy, and save lives.

Unfortunately, there is one bill from that Subcommittee, the Advancing Gig Economy Act, where we could not reach bipartisan agreement. I will have more to say about that bill when it is called up.

Turning to health care, we will consider several bipartisan bills that address the critical needs of both Medicare patients and providers, and lower costs for patients. Some of the bills before us today will extend critical programs to provide payment stability for doctors and ensure patients can receive quality care, all while lowering health care costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

We are also considering a number of bills that will improve the transparency of CMS's pathways to coverage for new technologies and treatments in the Medicare program, and

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Medicare Advantage program plan benefits. I appreciate my Republican colleagues' willingness to make changes to several bills to address Democratic concerns and ensure we don't hinder CMS's ability to prioritize the health and safety of Medicare beneficiaries.

I am also pleased we are considering a number of bipartisan policies to rein in the practices of pharmacy benefit managers. We are doing this by increasing transparency in Medicare Part D while also ensuring PBMs are truly providing a service to Part D plans and not retaining savings that could be used to lower costs for seniors. I will say that some of these policies, in particular H.R. 4881, need a substantial amount of additional work before they will be ready for floor consideration, but I am willing to move forward today with a commitment from Chair Rodgers that we will not go to the floor without working out the remaining technical and implementation issues.

I am also glad we found a bipartisan path forward on H.R. 2365, the National Plan to End Parkinson's Act. Prior to today's markup, Republicans were planning on making changes that in my view would have watered down the bill and undermine the bill's language ensuring that the Advisory Council on Parkinson's Research was representative and inclusive. I am glad that we have found a path forward and Republicans have accepted language that will actually strengthen the bill and ensure that minority communities and communities underrepresented in Parkinson's research are represented on the Advisory Council.

Finally, I am happy we will be considering the Cutting Copays Act, which will deliver savings for beneficiaries while encouraging the use of generic drugs.

While I look forward to advancing most of these bills, there are a few bills I cannot support. I oppose any policies that will result in increases in out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries, as well as policies that CMS simply cannot implement.

I'll have more to say on some of these bills, but for now, I yield back the balance of my time.