

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

***Hearing on “Legislative Proposals to Maintain and Improve the Public Health Workforce,
Rural Health, and Over-the-Counter Medicines”***

July 16, 2025

While we are here today to discuss several pieces of health legislation, we cannot forget that Republicans just cut more than a trillion dollars from our health care system and 17 million Americans stand to lose their health insurance. That is an increase in our nation’s uninsured rate of more than 50 percent. These are people who will not have access to the health care they need, who will get sicker, who will be overwhelmed with medical debt, and, sadly, who will die sooner. Moreover, hundreds of hospitals, nursing homes, and home care providers will be forced to close.

We heard from hospitals, doctors, the elderly and people with disabilities who have lined our hallways and this hearing room pleading for their health care. We heard from families who are afraid of falling farther and farther behind, from patient groups who fear for people with cancer, substance use disorders, and countless others.

Republicans ignored these concerns. They will literally do anything—including take health care away from their own constituents—to give giant tax breaks to the ultra-rich, who do not need them.

With that said, we are here to discuss several pieces of legislation. First, we are considering the bipartisan reauthorization of the Over-the-Counter Monograph Drug User Fee Program. Congress authorized this program in 2020 because of the need to more quickly provide safe and effective over-the-counter drug products to consumers. I was vocal in my concerns at the time that the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) OTC program was drastically under resourced. We gave FDA the authorities and resources it needed to allow the program to keep up with evolving science and technology and introduction of new formulations for consumers.

The authorization also allowed FDA the ability to more swiftly revise or update monographs in response to safety concerns. This was critical to ensuring the products that consumers use are safe, and that is why I have concerns with the sunscreen bill. As drafted, it undermines the existing bedrock safety and efficacy framework set forth in statute. However, I look forward to continuing bipartisan discussion to get to a solution that provides more options for consumers, while ensuring that those options are safe and effective.

We will also consider the FDA Modernization Act 3.0, which would require the agency to publish a final rule on alternative testing methods. I am pleased to hear from FDA that we will continue to see guidance come out of the agency as we have in the past, unimpacted by Trump’s 10-for-1 Executive Order.

We will also discuss important workforce reauthorizations, including the reauthorization of many of the Health Resources and Services Administration's Title VII and Title VIII health professions development programs. We continue to face nationwide shortages in health providers, and continuing all of the Title VII programs is essential to creating a robust network of providers.

Similarly, the Title VIII programs address all aspects of the nursing workforce, from education and recruitment to practice and retention. As the nursing shortage continues to grow, it is imperative that we reauthorize all of these crucial programs to support the nursing workforce.

Despite their proven track record in bolstering the health workforce, some of these important programs may be eliminated by the Trump Administration because they include words like "diversity" and "representation." In reality, what these programs are doing is helping us build a health workforce that is actually reflective of our country and is large enough to meet the needs of all of our communities. Eliminating these programs will only exacerbate health workforce shortages, and vulnerable communities will suffer the most.

We are also examining a few bills that support parents and infants across the country, including reauthorization of the Healthy Start Program. This program partners with local providers to improve health outcomes before, during, and after pregnancy, with the ultimate goal of reducing infant mortality and lowering rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, and maternal illness. I am pleased to see it included in this hearing and want to stress the importance of reauthorizing this program for the future.

Relatedly, we are considering legislation that will reauthorize the newborn screening program. While I am concerned the Trump Administration is disbanding the advisory committee that supports this lifesaving work, by reauthorizing this committee and program, we will show that Congress stands with families nationwide who rely on this crucial program.

I thank our witnesses for being here and look forward to the discussion. And I yield back the balance of my time.