

<<INTRODUCTION>>

Thank you, Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro, for holding this member day hearing.

The Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill is more than just budgetary line items — it saves lives. It protects the health of our communities, it gives our children a fair shot, and it ensures our seniors can age with dignity.

As we approach the FY27 appropriations cycle, we face a choice. We can weaken these lifesaving investments, or we can strengthen them. I urge us to strengthen them.

Today, I want to speak about two deeply personal priorities: cancer and drowning.

<<YOUR CANCER JOURNEY>>

Over 17 years ago, I heard the three words that change everything: “You have cancer.”

In that moment, fear took hold. The uncertainty. The questions. The fight ahead.

I battled cancer with everything I had. And I survived.

But survivorship gave me more than gratitude, it gave me purpose and passion. I decided to use my voice for the women who feel alone in that doctor’s office. For the

young women who never imagined cancer could happen to them. For the families who fear the worst.

No woman should fight this battle alone.

<<EARLY Act>>

That mission led me to champion the EARLY Act — landmark legislation that funds breast cancer awareness and education for young women about early screening and detection.

I'm grateful you funded this program at \$6,960,000 in FY26. For FY27, I respectfully request full funding at \$9 million.

With full funding, the CDC can expand outreach, strengthen provider education, and support the psychosocial needs of young survivors and previvors through community-based strategies. These dollars do not sit idle. They empower women with knowledge, connect them with care, and save lives. And the results show just that. Since the EARLY Act was signed into law, over 600,000 young breast cancer survivors now have access to breast cancer educational resources and tools.

We cannot take our foot off the gas.

Cancer does not wait. But when we detect it early, when we expand access to screenings, when we educate and empower women, we reduce mortality and increase survivorship. We turn fear into hope, and anxiety into action.

<<CUTS TO CANCER>>

Yet despite our progress, some in this administration have treated cancer research as optional.

Last year, President Trump's illegal withholding of funds from the National Institutes of Health forced 383 clinical trials to shut down, including trials testing new cancer treatments.

That decision didn't just cut funding. It cut off hope. It halted breakthroughs. It left patients waiting for treatments that may never come.

We cannot allow politics to contaminate science.

As appropriators, we must fully fund the National Cancer Institute and block harmful indirect cost caps at NIH. We must also implement guardrails to ensure cancer research funding is not being illegally withheld by this administration. Because Researchers need stability. Our scientists need certainty. And cancer patients deserve to see progress.

Lives depend on it.

<<DROWNING>>

Now I want to turn to another crisis. One that unfolds quietly, often without headlines, but devastates families just the same: drowning.

Last year in Florida, a record high 119 lives were lost to drowning. Since 2009, nearly three-quarters of Florida's drowning deaths have been children under three years old. And nationally, drowning remains the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4.

These are not accidents we must simply accept. This is a urgent public health crisis, and one we must call out.

The heartbreaking truth is that drowning is preventable.

When we invest in drowning prevention at the CDC, we equip communities with the tools to save children's lives. I thank you for funding drowning prevention at \$2 million in FY26. For FY27, I request \$5 million for drowning prevention activities at the CDC's National Center for Injury Control and Prevention.

With these resources, CDC can strengthen drowning surveillance, identify at-risk communities, and expand access to proven prevention strategies like swim lessons and water safety education.

We also know drowning does not strike evenly. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder face a risk 40 times higher than the general population. Children in low-income and rural communities face greater barriers to swim instruction and water safety resources.

We can change that.

No parent should experience the silence of a backyard pool gone wrong. No community should accept the preventable loss of a child.

<<CLOSING>>

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

I stand ready to work with both of you, and with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, to protect cancer research, strengthen lifesaving programs, and end the drowning crisis.

We have the power to save lives. Let's use it.