"Oversight of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration"
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
1:00 PM, Thursday, April 11, 2024
Statement for the Record
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly

I welcome this hearing on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as an important opportunity to examine Republican attacks on contraception, medication abortion, and in vitro fertilization (IVF). The reality of a post-Roe world is that Republicans are coming out of the shadows to open up new fronts in the war on reproductive rights. The FDA is one such front, and the fallout risks public safety and the credibility of the FDA.

The FDA serves as the guardian of public health by ensuring the safety, security, and access to millions of products that Americans rely on daily. One of the FDA's paramount achievements in recent years has been its commitment to expanding access to essential health care options. For instance, the FDA's approval of over-the-counter opioid reversal medication is a significant milestone in combating the opioid epidemic. It will save countless lives and provide much-needed support to individuals struggling with addiction. There were more than 100,000 overdose deaths in 2021 and 2022 and this will help us reverse this growing count.

Furthermore, the FDA's efforts to improve access to contraception and medication abortion underscore its commitment to reproductive health and autonomy. However, FDA's regulatory authority and science-driven approach is now being challenged by the extremists behind the personhood movement. The current Supreme Court case, *FDA v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine*, exemplifies the relentless and encroaching attacks by anti-abortion zealots. This time they are attacking FDA's decision-making processes alleging that FDA's approval of mifepristone, the first part of a two-pill medication abortion, is based on incomplete data.

Mifepristone is safe and has been tested extensively and in use for more than twenty years. It is even safer than Tylenol. Anti-abortion plaintiffs' baseless arguments have the potential to undermine the FDA's rigorous evaluation of medication abortion, further jeopardizing women's health and autonomy. This case has the potential to lead to further ideological attacks from the personhood movement on other safe drugs used for IVF. The extremists attacking reproductive rights did not stop after they succeeded in overturning *Roe v. Wade.* They are targeting medication abortion, contraception, and even IVF. Despite FDA's adherence to standard procedures and extensive research confirming the safety of mifepristone, these challenges underscore the urgent need to defend the FDA's regulatory integrity and scientific expertise.

The FDA's role in protecting consumers and promoting public health cannot be overstated. As we confront evolving challenges and threats, such as drug shortages, it is incumbent upon Congress to provide the FDA with the resources and authorities necessary to fulfill its mission effectively. By defending the FDA's regulatory integrity, supporting collaboration between industry stakeholders and regulatory authorities, and ensuring robust oversight, we can uphold the FDA's mandate to safeguard public health and ensure access to safe and effective products for all Americans. Most importantly, in doing so we insulate a critical

agency from the culture war attacks being waged by Republicans across the country that are costing people their rights, including fundamental reproductive rights.