

Rep. Ben Ray Lujan
Statement
Full Committee Markup: 21st Century Cures Act
May 21, 2015

I want to thank Chairman Upton, Chairman Pitts, Ranking Member Pallone, Ranking Member Green, and Congressman DeGette for their efforts on this bill. We have come a long way from the initial draft.

For example, I am especially pleased by the increase in funding for the National Institute of Health. This funding would increase support for awards to academic researchers at institutions across the country, and it represents a major victory both for patients and scientists. I am also pleased that the Manager's Amendment includes language focused on the recruitment of traditionally underrepresented groups in the scientific workforce. For America to succeed we need to recognize the importance of increasing women and minority participation in these important STEM fields and make a commitment to building a diverse workforce. This has been a top priority of mine, and I'd like to thank my many colleagues who also pushed for this provision and the Chairman for including it.

The 21st Century Cures Initiative has focused on identifying ways to get treatment and cures to patients faster. The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) has shown that one way to do this is by investing in research to improve the clinical trial process. I am encouraged by the success of innovative late-stage pre-clinical drug development programs run by NCATS. I am particularly excited by the success of the Bridging Interventional Development Gaps or BrIDGs program. As of October, four BrIDGs-supported agents have gone as far as Phase II clinical trials and third-parties have licensed at least eight agents as a result of their development by the BrIDGs program.

This is an excellent example of Technology Transfer. As the founder of the Technology Transfer Caucus, I'm very excited about the potential for Tech Transfer in 21st Century Cures and look forward to the benefits of eliminating some of the harmful restrictions on the NCATS program.

Additionally, 21st Century Cures includes language based off of bipartisan legislation I introduced last Congress with Congressman Gus Bilirakis, the Medicare Part D Patient Safety and Drug Abuse Prevention Act. The revised

Section 3141 would allow Medicare prescription drug plans to develop safe prescribing and dispensing programs to prevent fraud and abuse in the dispensing of controlled substances. I'm glad that the 21st Century Cures provision keeps the scope of our bill by applying this provision to all types of Medicare Part D plans and addressing all controlled substances. Overall, the Part D lock-in proposal in this draft strikes the right balance to preserve important beneficiary protections, but also address clearly documented program integrity concerns within the Medicare Part D program. I want to commend Congressman Bilirakis for his work on this issue.

I also want to recognize my colleagues on the Tele-Health working group, including Congresswoman Matsui. Expanding access to telemedicine is a must if we're going to build a 21st century healthcare system.

My home state of New Mexico scored an "A" on the recently issued American Telemedicine Association state report card because of its tele-health parity laws for private insurance, Medicaid and our state employee health plans. This is a vital issue to the health of New Mexicans and I support the goal of the working group, which is still pushing to open up Medicare reimbursement for tele-health.

I thank the committee leadership and committee staff again for their efforts on this bill and I look forward to a strong bipartisan vote.