

Opening Statement
Health Subcommittee Chairman Michael C. Burgess, M.D., R-TX
Full Committee Markup
March 8, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Health care is about people. People in Denton County, Texas; foresters in Oregon, Mr. Chairman; and, the hard-working families each of us has the privilege of serving in Congress.

As the most senior medical doctor on either side of the aisle serving in the House of Representatives, I understand the importance of getting this right. I've devoted my professional life and my public service to health care—it is my highest priority to improve the state of health care in our nation. To do so, we must put patients first— above politics, and above partisanship.

Today, we have the opportunity to help improve the lives of families across the country. As a member of Congress, I consider this one of the most distinct honors of my public service.

Patients are literally begging for relief. Don't take my word alone. Here's only a preview of what people in Texas are saying:

- After Obamacare, one mother is paying \$1,000 more per month for the same exact plan. “We cannot afford ACA,” she explained. “In this new world, how is a mother to provide health care for her family?”
- Another Texan has seen a 70 percent increase. “With no real additional benefit or value,” they said, “we will be paying an additional \$7,780 per year out of my paycheck.”

Sadly, they're not alone. The ACA is packed with Washington mandates and federal regulations. One of the ACA's biggest cost drivers is its one-size-fits-all, Washington-knows-best benefit mandates. For example, why would a childless adult need to pay for pediatric services, or an elderly woman pay for maternity coverage? To make matters worse, these benefits are tied to a formula called "actuarial value." Actuarial value requires plans to cover these benefits under a very strict cost structure. This means that Washington is literally mandating what product must be sold and at what cost. This is nothing short of politics above economics.

Look, we believe that the American people are in the best position to decide what best fits their needs. That a single mother working two jobs just to make ends meet know what's best for her young kids and will make the right decisions. At the same time, we are committed to preserving important patient protections, like allowing that same mother's kids to stay on her plan as they grow up and reach age 26. This is simply about fairness.

Just last week, President Trump laid out his vision for improving health care for patients in a joint address to Congress. This bill answers his call to maintain protections for patients living with pre-existing conditions, lower costs for consumers, and give states more flexibility and choice.

To drive down costs, we offer four simple ideas: giving patients more health care options, improving how much consumers pay by age, providing states with incentives to help stabilize markets and cover vulnerable Americans, and a new continuous coverage protection. Taken together, these four solutions will help every American get—and keep—better health care.

I would remind everyone that this is about people, and helping people means making tough decisions. The ACA is nothing shy of a failed political and social experiment that ignored the need, desire, and will of individuals across this country—to those people, I simply say, “We hear you.”