

Opening Statement
Health Subcommittee Chairman Michael C. Burgess, M.D., R-TX
October 4, 2017

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Today's markup is an important accomplishment for this Committee as we complete some of the most important work that we were tasked with for this year: extending vital, bipartisan safety net programs for the nation's most vulnerable populations.

In 2015, this Committee passed the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, which extended funding for many of the nation's safety net programs, including the Community Health Center Fund and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). With funding for both the Community Health Center Fund and the SCHIP program quickly expiring, our Committee must build upon the work we did in MACRA to ensure that these programs can continue.

These programs, including SCHIP, Community Health Center Funding, the National Health Service Corps, and the Special Diabetes Program are important programs that have proven incredibly effective at connecting individuals in medically underserved areas to care, and I am appreciative of the work that we all have put into the Helping Ensure Access for Little Ones, Toddlers, and Hopeful Youth by Keeping Insurance Delivery Stable Act (HEALTHY KIDS) and the Community Health and Medical Professionals Improve Our Nation Act (CHAMPION), which allow for us to continue these programs.

Improving access to care to vulnerable populations like children and medically underserved individuals has been a key priority of the Subcommittee on Health, and I am proud of the work product that we are putting forth today.

Additionally, I would like to highlight the important, bipartisan Medicare Part B reform bills that we will be marking up today. From repealing the Independent Payment Advisory Board to extending the Independence At Home Demonstration Program for an additional two years, these bills will bring targeted reforms to the Medicare program and will expand access to care to beneficiaries in meaningful ways.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge the inclusion of funding to extend Puerto Rico's Medicaid program. While this issue had not initially been included in our initial discussions this summer, a meeting with Congresswoman Gonzalez from Puerto Rico helped change this perspective for me, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with her to include this extension in my Helping Ensure Access for Little Ones, Toddlers, and Hopeful Youth by Keeping Insurance Delivery Stable Act.

I would like to thank the members of both the Subcommittee on Health and the Full Committee for their time and effort on today's bills, and I would like to personally thank Chairman Walden for his leadership and for ensuring that we could get these important bills across the finish line. There is still more work ahead for this Committee, in terms of addressing the opioid epidemic and the further promotion of access to care in the United States, and I hope that the bipartisan will that we are seeing today will carry forward and help us find solutions to these problems.