

**Testimony before Energy and Commerce**

Member Day Hearing

*Rep. Antonio Delgado (NY-19)*

First, thank you to Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Burgess for the opportunity to speak about a priority essential to my community.

It's unacceptable that the United States, the richest country in the world, is the only developed one without a universal health care system. This is one of the top reasons I came to Congress, and I'm proud to be here today to share with you all a bill I introduced to finally get us to that goal.

H.R. 2000, the Medicare-X Choice Act, establishes a public option health plan available for purchase on the individual and small business exchanges. I want to thank my colleagues Representatives Higgins and Larson for working with me on this important legislation.

The folks I talk to back home want more coverage options at lower costs. Importantly, the Medicare-X Choice Act would deliver by allowing those who are happy with their employer-provided insurance to keep

it, while giving another, more affordable coverage option to those who need it.

My bill would combine Medicare physician networks and reimbursement rates with ACA coverage standards to create a new, public option available to all Americans. The effect of creating a public floor in the private marketplace would be to drive down premiums and deductibles.

Another critical aspect of this legislation addresses an urgent priority for New York's 19<sup>th</sup> District—cost of prescription drugs.

Currently, Medicare is unable to negotiate drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry—a travesty. My bill will change this by allowing for such negotiation through Medicare Part D—and these prices would carry over to Medicare-X.

Lastly, my bill would expand access to premium tax credits to those beyond the 400% of the federal poverty line, the current threshold for premium assistance under the ACA.

With this bill, we're introducing more choice and more competition to the marketplace, starting in the places that need it most—like rural areas with provider shortages.

Our constituents expect us to take on the big issues impacting their lives—not shy away from the hard decisions.

Lowering the cost of health care should not be partisan. Taking on the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs should not be a divisive issue.

I'm here to be part of the solution. I encourage my colleagues to co-sponsor the Medicare-X Choice Act and join me in urging consideration of this bill to achieve universal coverage.

I thank my colleagues again for the opportunity to talk about a topic I care so deeply about and I yield back the balance of my time.