

Energy and Commerce Member Day – Statement:

Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden – Thank you for hosting today’s Member Hearing.

I appreciate the time you are giving to Members like me who are not on this Committee, but who share your concerns and wish to be involved in reforming issues related to Energy and Commerce.

As a bit of background, I represent a very large and rural district, the Fourth District of Arkansas.

My constituents are hard-working men and woman often just trying to make ends meet.

Our current system of health care is failing them. And as Members of Congress with the ability to address this broken system, we are failing them every day we do not take action.

Health insurance premiums are spiraling out of control, patients can barely afford essential medications that keep them alive, and costs to obtain care are outrageously unaffordable.

Furthermore, access is limited.

Individuals in my district must often drive hours just to get basic medical care because local providers are out of network or because telemedicine is not an option.

It’s simple – no one gives a lot of thought to health care when they don’t need it, but when they do, it’s all they think about.

There is no reason for this to be the case in the United States of America.

But I’m not here to simply to discuss the problems. I’m here to promote solutions.

I am not a doctor, pharmacist, or insurance actuary – though friends of mine who are experts in those fields do serve in Congress.

I am an engineer, trained to approach problems logically and methodically.

When the American Health Care Act and its Senate counterparts proved unsuccessful in attempts to address our nation’s health care crisis, I thought, why leave the heavy lifting to the traditional health care policymakers?

Might fresh eyes be useful?

With that mindset, I set out to develop a bipartisan health care bill that would provide the people of this nation with some relief.

The Fair Care Act, which I introduced earlier this year, is my answer to our nation’s health care crisis.

In it, I address public and private payers, drug prices, provider competition, and health care innovation.

My legislation would increase access to insurance provided on the ACA exchanges, create competition between providers and drug makers, and ensure long-term solvency of the Medicaid program without abandoning those who are currently covered.

It would continue to cover patients with pre-existing conditions.

And states would have increased opportunities to design health care programs that meet the unique needs of their population.

And please, before you assume that a Republican from the South couldn't possibly introduce legislation with provisions from both parties, familiarize yourself with its content.

For example, the bill limits the exclusivity period for certain drugs and biologic products, eliminates Medicare Parts B and D for wealthy individuals, funds subsidies for more individuals to enroll in insurance plans, reestablishes anti-trust laws that apply to health and dental insurers, holds Pharmacy Benefit Managers accountable for their actions, discourages hospital consolidation, and increases transparency throughout the system.

I've developed this legislation from my personal convictions as well as evidence-based research about what is best for the greatest number of Americans, without the influence of interest groups, lobbyists, or enterprises.

We have a choice as lawmakers, as Representatives sworn to serve our constituents.

We can either fight and bicker about trivial political matters for the next sixteen months, or we can work together to make progress and actually address this health care crisis.

Waiting until the next election cycle doesn't help the American people.

Waiting for the system to collapse doesn't help the American people.

Working together on real solutions does.

I bring this legislation to you today in the hopes that it will serve as a starting point for objective discussions and legitimate negotiations on these issues.

I'm willing to meet with any of you to discuss working together, and I sincerely hope that we do.

Health care cannot, and should not, be a political issue if we truly hope to help all Americans.

I thank you again for welcoming me today, and I look forward to working with you, my colleagues, to solve this problem once and for all.