

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Full Committee Organizational Meeting for the 119th Congress *January 15, 2024*

Thank you, Chairman Guthrie. I would like to begin by congratulating you on becoming Chair of the full Committee. Over the last couple of Congresses, it's been a pleasure working with you on some of the important bipartisan health care bills that we've advanced out of Committee and seen passed into law. This Committee has a strong and proud tradition of bipartisan collaboration. I am hopeful that bipartisan cooperation will continue this Congress, and I look forward to working with you to advance policies that will make a real difference in the lives of the American people.

At the same time, as we prepare for a second Trump Administration, we will aggressively fight Republican efforts to gut health care, environmental and consumer protections that Democrats have fought so hard to enact over the years.

Committee Democrats will fight to protect Americans' health care from attempts to repeal Medicare price negotiation, to sabotage the Affordable Care Act, and to cut Medicaid funding for low-income, elderly and disabled Americans. Republicans are crafting plans to take health care away from low- and middle-income Americans so they can provide huge tax cuts for billionaires and big corporations.

Next year, thanks to Democrats' finally empowering Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices, seniors are expected to save \$1.5 billion in out-of-pocket costs on the first 10 drugs that were negotiated. That's a lot of money and Medicare is set to negotiate another 15 drugs this year.

It was also another year of record enrollment in the Affordable Care Act Marketplaces with nearly 24 million Americans signing up so far for 2025. These records are thanks to Democrats' efforts to make the ACA more affordable – saving Americans an average of \$800 annually on their premiums. And nearly 80 million Americans are now enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program thanks to Democrats easing unnecessary burdens that make it impossible for people to enroll in and maintain their coverage.

We should be working together to build upon these successes – not repealing or weakening them.

We will also fight efforts to repeal the climate provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act that are strengthening our economy, lowering energy costs, and combating the worsening climate crisis that is costing lives and livelihoods. We are seeing the results of the climate crisis play out right now in California with the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles. It's another reminder that we must continue to aggressively combat the climate crisis.

Our investments in clean energy are growing our economy for the future – so far more than 400,000 good-paying jobs have been created, and the law is expected to create nine million jobs over the next decade, many of these are in Republican districts. If Republicans move forward with a polluters over people agenda that undermines our clean energy efforts, they will be surrendering our clean energy leadership to our adversaries.

We should be laser focused on fighting on behalf of the American people, not billionaires and giant corporate interests. We should be focused on lowering everyday costs for American families, growing our economy, protecting consumers, and leading the clean energy transition.

Now, allow me to welcome and introduce the seven new Democratic Members of the committee. We truly have a diversely talented and very capable group of new Members.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York has been a strong advocate for addressing the climate crisis and fighting to create a more just economy.

Representative Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts is in his third term. He's prioritized promoting clean energy, lowering health care costs, and ending gun violence.

Representative Troy Carter of Louisiana has focused on environmental justice, mental health, and health equity during his four years in the House.

Representative Rob Menendez of New Jersey has pushed to modernize our nation's crumbling infrastructure and increasing affordability for American families.

Representative Kevin Mullin of California has fought to strengthen climate resilience and to build an economy that works for everyone.

Representative Greg Landsman of Ohio has been a strong advocate for children and families over his entire career, including his two years in Congress.

And Representative Jennifer McClellan of Virginia is also in her second term in the House and has focused on combating the climate crisis and preserving reproductive health care.

I congratulate all new members on both sides of the aisle, and I welcome everyone else back as well – as we get to work for the American people. I yield back.