

**Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
Hearing on “Examining Public Health Legislation to Help Local  
Communities”**

Opening Statement  
*November 20, 2013*

Thank you, Chairman Pitts, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today; a very special welcome to Laura Crandall from New Jersey. She and I have worked together for many years on my bill that is before the Subcommittee today. Your strength and determination is commendable.

I am happy that the Subcommittee is having this hearing and moving forward with several public health bills. It is an important function of this Subcommittee to examine public health priorities and to move legislation to promote and protect the public health. I would like to say a few words about each of the seven bills before us today.

Firstly, I am particularly pleased that we will be examining a bill that I introduced, H.R. 669, the Sudden Unexpected Death Data Enhancement and Awareness Act. Stillbirth and sudden unexpected infant death affect tens of thousands of families every year, according to data from CDC, and sudden infant death syndrome is the leading cause of death for infants up to 12 months old. However, we currently lack the comprehensive, high-quality data we need to help better understand this problem.

My bill seeks to enhance CDC's activities in this area and would expand and standardize surveillance and data collection for stillbirth and sudden unexpected infant death and develop protocols and training for medical examiners for investigating these tragic deaths. I would like to submit for the record endorsement letters from 24 organizations, including the CJ Foundation, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and First Candle.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of another bill we will examine today. H.R. 1098, the Traumatic Brain Injury Reauthorization Act of 2013, was

authored by my friend and colleague from New Jersey, Mr. Pascrell.

Traumatic brain injury (or “TBI”) has been dubbed “the silent epidemic,” with at least 1.7 million TBI’s occurring every year in the United States, many causing death or permanent disability. This bill would continue efforts to advance better surveillance, prevention, and treatment of this serious public health problem.

We will also cover today, the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Reauthorization Act of 2013, which would update the 2008 law that established national newborn screening guidelines by expanding and improving state screening programs, parent and provider education, and follow-up care. Newborn screening allows thousands of infants every year the chance to recognize and manage detectable conditions early on, and it improves their chances of a more positive health outcome and better quality of life.

We will also hear from our witnesses on H.R. 610, a bill that would establish a Tick-Borne Diseases Advisory Committee within the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to prioritize and coordinate efforts to address tick-borne diseases like Lyme disease. CDC estimates there are 300,000 cases of Lyme disease every year, and it is my understanding that Lyme disease is a growing threat in the United States, due to ecological changes and changes in land use over the past few decades that have increased the number and proximity to humans of wild animal Lyme hosts and the ticks that can spread it to humans.

The fifth bill we will look at today is H.R. 2703, the Family Health Care Accessibility Act of 2013, which would decrease barriers to healthcare professionals volunteering at community health centers (or “CHCs”). CHCs provide vital access to care, especially for those underserved and vulnerable populations who can benefit most from the comprehensive, quality primary care services these centers provide. For the over 22 million patients

currently served by CHCs, it is important that these centers are adequately staffed.

Another bill we will consider today would reauthorize the poison control center grant program. I understand that poison exposure is a leading cause of unintentional injury in the United States, and poison control centers help to reduce the number of deaths and the severity of illness caused by poisoning.

Finally, I am glad that we are considering the National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (or “NASPER”) Reauthorization, which I coauthored with my colleague from Kentucky, Mr. Whitfield. This legislation helps states set up prescription drug monitoring programs in order to combat prescription drug abuse, which is a growing epidemic in the United States. It is critical that we continue support for this program through federal funding.

Thank you to the many Members who have led these important efforts by introducing these bills. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on these important public health issues. Thank you.