

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden**  
**Subcommittee on Health**  
**Markup on H.R. 829 and H.R. 181**  
**February 7, 2017**

Today is our first subcommittee markup of the new Congress. And it marks a new chapter and opportunity we have to lead. It's a big opportunity and one we aren't taking lightly. Our goal is straightforward – to modernize America's health care laws by always making what's best for patients our top priority.

As the committee of jurisdiction, we are focused on ways to strengthen, improve, and modernize the Medicaid program. We all agree, the Medicaid program is a critically important safety net for millions of Americans – low-income adults, children, pregnant women, the elderly, or those who are blind or have disabilities.

We are committed to protecting these patients and to supporting innovative, patient-centered solutions at the state and local levels, particularly as we work to ensure the solvency of this program, prioritizing federal funding to make sure that those most in need of medical services in our communities get better quality, affordable care.

Today we continue our work with those goals in mind, starting with bills authored by former Chairman Fred Upton and Rep. Markwayne Mullin. These bills will empower states with more flexibility, and help prioritize the Medicaid program for the most vulnerable. And this important flexibility and reform are exactly what Governors are begging for us to give them. Just a couple weeks ago, I met and listened to more than a dozen governors. Their requests were as clear as

they were common: “Give states the flexibility to care for our people in ways we know work.”

The bills we are considering today originated from our members listening to their constituents and leaders back home who are calling on Congress to do more to root out waste, fraud, and abuse. For the last 14 years, the Government Accountability Office has put Medicaid on the list of “high risk” federal programs because. Last week before our Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, the GAO and the HHS Office of Inspector General reminded us of how a lack of data and transparency impedes their work.

Today’s proposals make commonsense changes to close loopholes, root out abuses, and target savings to help patients most in need. As we move through regular order on these bills, I hope we can also have a discussion about how to target some of the savings from these bills to help improve Medicaid benefits.

Know that these are just the first, small steps forward in our journey. In the weeks and months ahead, we will actively work to improve the health care choices and affordability for all patients. Today’s bills represent only a fraction of the work we need to do, but they are an excellent start to our step-by-step approach to improve our health care system.