

**Opening Statement of Chairman Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health Hearing
“Supporting Tomorrow’s Health Providers: Examining Workforce Under the Public
Health Service Act”
September 14, 2017**

The Subcommittee will come to order.

The Chairman will recognize himself for an opening statement.

Today’s hearing provides us with an important opportunity to begin a discussion on how best to address provider shortages in our country and how to ensure that today’s medical students have the skills and resources to succeed in the 21st century. As a physician, I have always supported programs that improve access to care and enhance the patient experience, and the programs that we are examining today seek to accomplish this very goal.

When looking at the data, our mission is clear. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that by the year 2030, the United States will have a projected physician shortage ranging from 40,800 providers to as many 104,900 providers.

To address this looming issue, our hearing will focus on four sets of unique programs: the National Health Service Corps, Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education, physician workforce programs

under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, and nursing workforce programs under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act. Each of these programs seeks to increase access to providers in underserved areas and to promote the training opportunities for medical students and providers to maintain their skills.

For example, programs like the National Health Service Corps, Area Health Education Centers which are supported by Title VII grants, and Teaching Health Centers tackle these shortages head on by connecting young providers with underserved communities. These programs are essential to addressing the nation's provider shortages because they serve as driving forces that can connect providers to underserved communities and can support the care needs of individuals that would otherwise be unavailable without the providers that participate in these programs.

Additionally, programs under Title VII and Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act provide an array of opportunities to support education in health professional schools. These programs range from

supporting disadvantaged students to attend medical school to supporting fellowships and faculty positions so that health professional schools can continue to meet the needs of students.

Title VII and Title VIII also support opportunities for continuing medical education for the healthcare workforce, which is not only mandatory for many providers to keep their licenses, but is also essential to providers as they attempt to keep up with evolving issues and treatments. In an age with breakthrough drugs and a 21st Century Cures Act that is supporting future innovations, we must ensure that our healthcare workforce is ready for these breakthroughs and is prepared for future challenges in delivering care.

This hearing, however, comes at a precarious time for these programs as we attempt to reauthorize them and extend their funding. For Title VII and Title VIII which have both expired yet continue to receive appropriations on a year by year basis, a commitment by this Subcommittee to reauthorize these programs would ensure longer-term

stability and offer future generations of providers with opportunities to grow and serve our communities.

And for the National Health Service Corps and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program which have funding that will expire at the end of the fiscal year, our Subcommittee is hard at work ensuring that these programs will continue to operate and serve communities in the coming years. As is the case with all programs with mandatory funding, finding offsets can be challenging, but I am committed to finding a solution and to extending these programs.

I would like to thank each of our witnesses for being here today and providing their insights on the problems ahead. Dr. Adrian Billings, the Chief Medical Office of Preventive Care Health Services, Dr. Neil Calman, the President of the American Association of Teaching Health Centers, Dr. Janice Knebl, from the University of North Texas Health Science Center, and Dr. Juliann Sebastian, the Dean of the College of Nursing at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, are each

celebrated providers and experts in their respective fields, and I look forward to hearing from them.

These are not the only programs that support our nation's healthcare workforce, but they are each important and deserve our immediate attention. And as we move beyond the immediacy, I look forward to delving further into this issue and identifying new opportunities to support providers and underserved communities.