

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Supporting Tomorrow’s Health Providers: Examining Workforce Programs
Under the Public Health Service Act”

September 14, 2017

I’m pleased we are holding this hearing to discuss programs critical to the success of our health workforce. A strong health workforce is the bedrock of a strong health system overall. It's essential that we continue to sufficiently invest in all our health workforce programs to ensure they are meeting the country's needs.

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Program provides financial support to health professional students and primary care providers who commit to provide service in medically underserved areas. The incentives provided by this program help place providers in the communities that need them the most. However, without Congressional action, funding for NHSC will expire on September 30, 2017. I strongly support extending funding for this program.

Similar to NHSC, funding for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THC GME) Program is also set to expire at the end of the fiscal year. Teaching Health Centers train primary care medical and dental residents in community based settings such as Community Health Centers. THC graduates are far more likely to remain in primary care and to practice in rural and underserved communities compared to traditional GME graduates. Without renewed funding before September 30th THC residencies could potentially be interrupted or terminated. I strongly support H.R. 3394, introduced by Representative McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), which would fund the program for three years at an improved funding level. H.R. 3394 would provide THCs the financial stability they need to adequately train a class of residents.

H.R. 3728, the Education Medical Professionals and Optimizing Workforce Efficiency and Readiness (EMPOWER) Act of 2017, introduced by Representatives Burgess (R-TX), Schakowsky (D-IL), and Bucshon (R-IN), would reauthorize the programs in Title VII of the Public Health Service Act that received funding through the FY 2017 Appropriations process. Title VII programs provide valuable training to our nation’s healthcare professionals. I support the reauthorization of these programs and thank the bill’s sponsors for their work on this issue.

Finally, H.R. 959, the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2017 would reauthorize the Title VIII programs that received funding through the FY 2017 Appropriations process. Programs in Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act improve nursing education, practice, recruitment, and retention. A well trained nursing workforce benefits all Americans and I strongly support these programs. I thank the bill’s sponsors, Representatives Joyce (R-OH) and Matsui (D-CA), for their bipartisan work on this issue.