



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
DEMOCRATS  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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## **Pallone Opening Remarks at HHS Budget Hearing**

**Washington, DC** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Health hearing on “Oversight of the Department of Health and Human Services:”*

To my dismay but not my surprise, President Trump’s 2019 budget proposal continues the cruel and complacent perspective of ripping health care away from millions of Americans to help pay for the Republicans tax scam that overwhelmingly benefits the wealthy and corporations. This budget is an attack on working families, seniors and life-saving programs.

I want to just highlight some of the more egregious issues with this budget. It doubles down on gutting and capping the Medicaid program, the nation’s largest health insurer and cuts our nation’s safety net by \$1.4 trillion. Meanwhile, it builds on the Administration’s ongoing, illegal efforts to kick vulnerable Americans off Medicaid through work requirements, lock outs, and proposed lifetime limits. Simply put – the Trump Administration’s vision for our country through this budget is to take coverage away from families living on the brink that depend on Medicaid to make ends meet.

The Trump budget also includes over \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare, jeopardizing health care for seniors. Deep cuts to safety net providers, nursing homes, home health agencies, and other providers appear to be based not on any real policy rationale, but cutting for the sake of cutting. Essentially cut health care for seniors to pay for that Republican tax cut.

Sadly, the Trump budget continues the same Republican efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. As proposed, ACA repeal would leave millions more uninsured, gut protections for preexisting conditions, and result in a \$675 billion cut to our healthcare system. In addition, ongoing efforts to sabotage the ACA, such as cutting off cost-sharing reductions and rolling back consumer protections, have already resulted in skyrocketing costs for middle-class families and 3 million more Americans uninsured in 2017. And now – HHS is sitting by the sidelines while Idaho clearly circumvents the law. This is simply unacceptable.

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Today, we will hear from newly confirmed HHS Secretary Azar. Mr. Azar moves into the top leadership position at a trying time – the Department has been embroiled in scandals since Day 1. From former Secretary Tom Price’s exorbitant travel expenses, to the use of official resources to lobby in favor of repeal and replace, to Brenda Fitzgerald’s purchase of tobacco stock while she was the head of CDC, these issues deserve immediate attention. This morning, I sent a [letter](#) to Secretary Azar asking him to conduct a top-down review of the Department and all of its operating divisions, to assess the extent to which HHS personnel are abiding by all applicable federal ethical regulations and policies, and whether appropriate safeguards are in place to protect against abuse and conflicts of interest. I hope we hear today about his plans to faithfully uphold the laws set by Congress, improve transparency and eliminate conflicts of interest, and protect the health of working families. The American people deserve a commitment to restoring the integrity of the Department.

Thank you.

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