

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Health
“Texas v. U.S.: The Republican Lawsuit and Its Impacts on Americans with
Pre-Existing Conditions”
February 6, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, Madam Chair. Congratulations on taking over the helm of this very important subcommittee. I only wish we were meeting today to pass bipartisan legislation to protect Americans with pre-existing health conditions from losing coverage. Let me speak on behalf of Republicans: We fully support protecting Americans with pre-existing conditions. We’ve said this repeatedly, we’ve acted accordingly, and we mean it completely. We could—and should—inject certainty into the system by passing legislation to protect those with pre-existing conditions.

On the opening day of the 116th Congress, House Republicans brought a powerful, but simple measure to the floor that called on this body to legislate on what we all agree needs to be done – locking in protections for patients with pre-existing conditions. Unfortunately, House Democrats voted it down.

Our amendment was consistent with our long-held views. With respect to the American Health Care Act, which our Democratic colleagues continue to mispresent, we provided protections for those with pre-existing conditions. Under the AHCA:

- Insurance companies were prohibited from denying or not renewing coverage due to a pre-existing condition. Period.
- Insurance companies were banned from rescinding coverage based on a pre-existing condition. Period.
- Insurance companies were banned from excluding benefits based on a pre-existing condition. Period.
- Insurance companies were prevented from raising premiums on individuals with pre-existing conditions who maintain continuous coverage. Period.

The fact is, we agree on this issue. And we can work together expeditiously to guarantee pre-existing condition protections for all Americans and do so in manner that can withstand judicial scrutiny.

And while a status check on the ACA lawsuit is interesting, the ruling has been stayed, Attorneys General across the country have filed appeals, Speaker Pelosi has

moved to intervene in the case, and Americans' premiums and coverage for this year are not affected.

But what really does affect American consumers is the out-of-control costs of health care. That's what they would like Congress to focus on. When will we tackle the high cost of health care?

The fact of the matter is that for too many Americans health insurance coverage exists solely on paper because health care costs and high deductibles are putting family budgets in peril. When the Affordable Care Act passed, Democrats promised people their insurance premiums would go down \$2500. Unfortunately, the exact opposite has occurred for many Americans. And not only have premiums gone up--not down--but also out-of-pocket costs have sky-rocketed.

The latest "solution" from the Democratic Party is a government takeover of healthcare, called Medicare for All. We know that this plan would take away private health insurance from more than 150 million Americans, end Medicare as we know it, and rack up more than \$32-trillion in costs, not to mention delays in accessing health services.

Madam Chairwoman, other committees in this body have announced plans to have hearings on Medicare for All. Speaker Pelosi has said she is supportive of holding hearings on this radical plan. Madam Chairwoman, in fact, you yourself called for such hearings.

A majority of House Democrats supported Medicare for All in the last Congress – in fact, two-thirds of committee Democrats, 20 members, 11 of whom serve on the Health subcommittee, cosponsored the plan.

I think it is important for the American people to fully understand what this huge, new, government intervention into health care means for consumers. Yesterday, Dr. Burgess and I sent a letter to you and Chairman Pallone asking for a hearing on Medicare for All, as we are the committee with primary jurisdiction over health care issues.

The American people need to fully understand how Medicare for All is not Medicare at all, but actually just government-run, single-payer health care. They need to know about the \$32 trillion price tag for such a plan, and the tax increases necessary to pay for it. They need to know that it ends employer sponsored health care, forcing the 158 million Americans who get their health care through their job

or union into a one-size-fits-all, government-run plan. If you like waiting in line at the DMV wait until the government completely takes over health care.

Seniors need to fully understand how this plan does away with the Medicare Trust Fund that they have paid into their entire lives, and the impacts on their access to care. Our tribes need to understand how this plan impacts the Indian Health Service, and our veterans deserve to know how this plan paves the way to closing the VA.

So, the question is: when will we see the bill and when will we have a hearing on the legislation?

Meanwhile, we need to work together to help states stabilize health markets damaged by the ACA, cut out-of-pocket costs, promote access to preventive services, encourage participation in private health insurance, and increase the number of options available through the market.

So, let's work together to lock in pre-existing condition protections, tackle ever-rising health care costs, and help our states offer consumers more affordable health insurance. And if Democrats must move forward on a complete government

takeover of health care, please pledge to give the American people a chance to read the bill so that we'll all know what's in it before we have to vote on it.