

**Statement for the Record
Chairman Elijah E. Cummings
Committee on Oversight and Reform**

**Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Hearing on “Making Prescription Drugs More Affordable:
Legislation to Negotiate a Better Deal for Americans”**

September 25, 2019

Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Burgess, Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden, and all Members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for holding today’s incredibly important hearing on legislation to combat the actions of drug companies and the skyrocketing prices of prescription drugs.

This is an issue of utmost importance to American families across the country and, as you are demonstrating here today, it is of utmost importance to Congress.

I have been working to address skyrocketing drug prices for years. What I have seen time and time again is how the unchecked ability of drug companies to raise prices higher and higher has imposed real and devastating consequences on millions of families—and our entire health care system. This is an unsustainable system that cannot continue.

This Congress, I have made this issue my top priority as Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Reform. Our very first hearing of the Congress was on this issue. Over the course of three hearings on prescription drugs this year we heard gut-wrenching firsthand testimony from families about facing financial ruin because of a cancer diagnosis, about impossible choices to afford their medications, and about losing a loved one over the price of a vial of insulin.

I know these are issues that you all have been focused on, and I am heartened that today’s hearing will address potential solutions.

I am deeply grateful to the Subcommittee for considering my legislation, the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Act, which would finally allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower drug prices on behalf of Medicare Part D beneficiaries.

This basic issue—allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug companies—has widespread support. Most people cannot understand why our own government prohibits itself from sitting down at the negotiating table when it comes to buying prescription drugs.

This is also a proposal that President Trump claimed repeatedly that he supports. He has warned that the pharmaceutical industry is “getting away with murder,” and he has said that the U.S. must “create new bidding procedures for the drug industry.” President Trump claimed that Americans could save hundreds of billions of dollars if Medicare were allowed to negotiate prices directly with drug companies. “We don’t do it,” he said. “Why? Because of the drug companies.”

Unfortunately, my experience with the White House has not been encouraging. I met with President Trump shortly after he took office and presented him with a draft of my bill, which the Subcommittee is considering today. I asked for his feedback, and I asked for his support. Unfortunately, I got nothing but radio silence, despite the fact that I sent three different letters after that meeting seeking to work together.

The reason this is so disappointing is because President Trump made a promise to all of his supporters—and to all Americans—that he would do this. But it has been nearly three years, and he has not fulfilled that promise.

Now, just last week, the President said publicly that he might want to meet with me again. This was certainly a surprise since I had heard nothing from him for years. If he is serious about tackling this issue, this is a meeting I would gladly take.

However, we should not wait for the Trump Administration to act. Our top priority should be to do exactly what you are doing here today—moving legislation through this markup process and through the House.

Once again, I applaud Chairman Pallone, Chairwoman Eshoo, and all Members of this panel for taking up this critical fight. I am hopeful that if we are able to advance these solutions, we will start to level the playing field for patients and their families across the country.