

**Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Health  
Social Determinants of Health / Data Collection Hearing  
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*As Prepared for Delivery*

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**SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH**

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Social and economic conditions have a powerful influence on our health and well-being.

Dependable transportation, job security, and access to healthy foods are all factors that make a difference in the prevention and management of many conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

Today, 9.3 million Americans are currently on the sidelines and out of work.

Unemployed individuals are more likely to suffer from illnesses such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, and arthritis.

Unemployment leads to worse health outcomes on average for all workers, regardless of their baseline measures of health.

It's a cycle of despair that must be broken for healthier families.

We need to get Americans back to work.

People need hope... and a purpose. It means more than just a job. It's about dignity and the opportunity for a better life.

And we're only just beginning to understand the impact of pandemic lockdowns on mental health.

This is a crisis. One hospital I talked to said social isolation is the biggest concern for seniors...

....not to mention the rise in mental health emergencies we've seen for our kids.

For hope and real results, we should be looking to how the private sector and communities are leading the way for healthier futures. .

## **PRIVATE SECTOR**

In my district, to help reach people without transportation, Washington State University partnered with Range Health to purchase a mobile health unit to provide primary care, noninvasive procedures, and preventative screening for underserved, rural communities.

Some rideshare apps are also allowing eligible patients to order rides to and from doctors' appointments, often paid for by health insurance companies.

Meal delivery services are also helping seniors access nutritious food....and Medicare Advantage offers coverage options for these services.

According to recent CMS data, 60% of Medicare Advantage beneficiaries are enrolled in a plan that offers food assistance.

The number of seniors that chose Medicare Advantage plans offering these "supplemental benefits," like food assistance, housing, pest control tripled between 2020 and 2021.

I look forward to listening to and learning more from our witnesses today on how Medicare Advantage flexibilities are helping address social determinants of health in our seniors...

... what more we can do to incentivize the private sector.

In 2021, Medicare Advantage plans cover 26 million people, which is a little over 40 percent of the entire Medicare population. Seniors from all walks of life are choosing these private run plans over government run fee-for-service plans.

They are spending less and getting better preventive care because of it.

I'm extremely concerned by proposals from Democrat colleagues that would ban Medicare Advantage plans and move everyone to a one-size-fits all government run plan.

### **Concerns with Legislation**

The federal government should provide incentives and enable the private sector to tackle these social determinants in ways that empower local communities.

However, as we look at data policies, we need to be very clear with the American people about **who** is collecting what data, and **how** it will be used.

Some of the bills today authorize enormous sums of money before we even have a clear understanding of what the private sector, state, local, and federal governments are already doing and what is working.

That approach may work to score political points, but it doesn't drive real results.

I also have concerns continuing short-sighted COVID-19 specific legislation. I recently spoke with former CDC Director Robert Redfield.

He said the big pandemic is yet to come.

We don't know if that will be a coronavirus, pandemic flu, or something entirely new.

We need to be working on preparing data systems and public health for all threats, not just COVID, and take into account where these systems are after the large investment and lessons learned from COVID-19.

## **CONCLUSION**

We should be empowering innovative methods – that are backed by trusted data – to address social determinants of health.

Doctors, hospitals, state and local governments, community groups, and health insurers are leading the way in fighting social determinants of health.

We need to enable their continued leadership and success and remove any arbitrary roadblocks.

I'm looking forward to today's discussion and I yield back.