

Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Health Subcommittee Hearing
“Enhancing Public Health: Legislation to Protect Children and Families”
October 20, 2021
As Prepared for Delivery

INTRO

Many of the solutions we are considering today renew key public health programs.

I have led for years on the importance of addressing expired authorizations that continue to be appropriated, so I’m pleased to see our Members fulfilling the duties we have as an authorizing committee.

Mr. Carter’s Improving the Health of Children Act reauthorizes activities at the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

Mr. Walberg’s Lead Poisoning Prevention Act renews critical lead poisoning prevention and screening initiatives.

Dr. Dunn’s bill reauthorizes prostate cancer activities at the CDC.

Other bills reauthorize programs that expire next year, like Mr. Guthrie’s Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Reauthorization Act.

We will also be considering bills that establish new public health programs.

Like Representative Mullin and Herrera Butler’s SHINE for Autumn Act to mitigate the risk of stillbirths and help more moms and babies...

.... and Mr. Barr’s CAROL Act that will improve research and public health outreach related to heart disease.

PROCESS

ALL of these solutions reflect the importance of the committee's authorizing responsibilities over key public health programs.

It's important for federal agencies to come before this committee to comment, discuss programs, and other related health initiatives, and that should have happened today.

In fact, except for a budget hearing with Secretary Becerra on a budget that was not released at the time...

.... no administration official has come up before the health subcommittee yet this Congress.

We need to hear from the administration and public health officials.

They have **NOT** been before this committee even after making top-down decisions that impact every person in this country related to COVID-19 data, changing guidelines, schools, vaccine mandates, and booster shots.

It's undermining trust in public health...

... and people's abilities to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

We are also seeing an historic surge in opioid overdose deaths... made worse by economic shutdowns, lost jobs, isolation, fear, and despair.

The Majority's refusal to bring the administration before us to address real crises like these is an abdication of our oversight and legislative responsibilities.

PLOWING THE HARD GROUND

We should be plowing the hard ground...listening and working together... to crush this pandemic and modernize health care.

The bills we are considering touch on several important issues, but given the central role our public health programs have played over the last year and a half, and the massive influx of funding they have received as part of the pandemic response...

... we should be addressing these public health agencies more holistically.

Let's hear from states and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration on how to save lives, combat the opioid epidemic, and improve the mental health of children who are in crisis.

Let's permanently schedule fentanyl analogs in Schedule I.

DEA is warning the American public on the increasing dangers of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl.

Let's learn from the pandemic how we can safely speed up innovation, like we did to get safe and effective vaccines and apply those lessons To discover new cures and treatments.

Let's investigate how this pandemic even started so it never happens again.

This Committee has a rich history of bipartisan work—by listening and then leading on solutions to solve our greatest challenges.

Today is a small step in that direction...

.... but we have a lot more work to do to address top concerns of the American people.

Reconciliation

This brings me to the tax and spending spree that Speaker Pelosi is re-writing behind closed doors right now.

It will lead to fewer cures, lost coverage, and force the sick to beg the government for lifesaving care.

Just yesterday, CBO provided its analysis that shows the dangers of the Majority's lurch to socialized medicine that will cost more than a half trillion dollars.

2.8 million people will lose their employer sponsored health plan.

Just like 11 years ago, Speaker Pelosi plans to pass a massive bill that radically disrupts people's lives and livelihoods... and, if you like your health insurance, you may not be able to keep it.

CONCLUSION

I again urge this Committee to get back to the People's work... not Pelosi's work....and we're taking a step in the right direction today.

I hope we can continue this encouraging trend by addressing the important major public health issues facing our nation today.

Thank you, I yield back.