

Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Health Subcommittee Hearing 4.26.23
Opening Statement
As Prepared for Delivery

WELCOME

Good morning.

Today, we will hear from Administrator Brooks-LaSure and a range of stakeholders on proposals to lower the costs of health care for Americans through increased transparency and competition.

This committee has a rich history of plowing the hard ground on issues from data privacy to mental health...

... and I'm proud we're coming together on another top priority for the American people.

Each day it seems we see a new and more unbelievable story of patients struggling to afford their care and navigate the system:

A 4-year-old getting bills his parents can't protest.

Entire books dedicated to helping people challenge hospital bills and overcome denials of care issued by insurance companies that receive billions in premiums and subsidies each year.

Addressing these challenges won't be easy, but I know this committee is up to the task.

Today's Bills

Transparency is essential for patients and employers, to know and plan for their health care costs. It's foundational to rebuilding the doctor-patient relationship.

Seven proposals before us improve transparency in the system, and I'm thankful for Ranking Member Pallone for leading H.R. 2691, the Transparent PRICE Act, with me.

Our bill has been years in the making, and it is a culmination of a lot of bipartisan work and discussions to bring price transparency to the forefront.

Our bill builds on regulations released by the Trump Administration and enforced by the Biden Administration, which just had to levy two more fines against hospitals to comply.

Thank you, Ranking Member Pallone, for working with me for years now on this important issue, starting with ensuring implementation of the rule and now building on it with this legislation.

More proposals also help people understand what happens when their insurer owns their doctor, pharmacy, a PBM, and if that is driving value or unaffordable costs for the system.

Five bills and proposals look to reduce what patients and employers pay for medicines through transparency and competition...

And lastly, a number address incentives for consolidation in federal health care programs.

At our bipartisan hearing last month, we heard a story about a senior from Ohio with painful arthritis.

The cost of her annual steroid injection increased from \$30 to \$1,400 because her office clinic reclassified as a hospital department, even though it was the exact same service, from the exact same provider, in the exact same building.

Today, patients and Medicare pay more at hospitals than outpatient centers or physician offices for the same services.

Several proposals would advance "site-neutral payments" for certain services that can be routinely done safely in a doctor's office, such as

Drug administration... diagnostic tests... imaging procedures... to name a few.

For these services, Medicare and patients would pay the same amount, regardless of where they are performed.

Ideas for site neutral payments are bipartisan.

Presidents Obama and Trump proposed them in their budgets.

Before this Committee, Secretary Becerra committed to working on these policies.

This is the right thing to do for patients.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimated site neutral policies would save Medicare patients \$94 billion over ten years.

Let's be clear:

Hospitals are integral parts of our communities and we recognize the effects of high labor costs, inflation, and ever-increasing government regulation.

But the question before us is:

Should we support hospitals through a complex and opaque network of cross-subsidies with unintended consequences, like consolidation, that increase costs for patients?

.. or do we separately work on a transparent, accountable way to support hospitals that need it?

I am glad the American Hospital Association is here today. I hope we can come together to address these issues for patients to get the care they need at a cost they can afford.

Conclusion

As I close, I again want to thank Ranking Member Pallone and all my colleagues for leading on solutions in a bipartisan way.

This is bigger than any one person or political party.

It's about people, especially the most vulnerable, who for too long have struggled in a health care system that is too expensive and too complex.

Many are discussion drafts... We are having this hearing to understand what work needs to be done to move these policies forward.

I invite all stakeholders to provide constructive feedback to inform our bipartisan work.

Patients all over the country are hopeful that Congress may finally work together to address the health care cost and complexity, and I'm proud E&C continues to lead the way.