

Opening Statement for the Honorable Brett Guthrie

“Health Subcommittee Markup of 23 Bills”

May 16, 2024

- Over the past several weeks, the Health Subcommittee has led the way bringing forward solutions to address some of the biggest challenges facing patients and our health care system.
- Today we’re continuing that effort by advancing critical legislation that will help patients access life-saving cures, enable seniors to continue receiving care from the comfort of their homes, strengthen the Medicaid program for vulnerable patients, and support our workforce so that every American can get the care that they need.
- We now have FDA approved therapies that in many instances are the only treatments available for rare disease patients and their families.
- Part of the reason for the rapid development of these therapies is because of the congressionally established Pediatric Rare Disease Priority Review Voucher program in 2012. Over 50 vouchers have been awarded as a result of this program, 39 for pediatric rare diseases and over half of which have been awarded over the past 5 years.
- That’s why I am glad we’re considering legislation which would continue life-saving access to therapies for kids living with rare diseases who currently lack access to any treatments.

- I would like to thank Representative Bilirakis for his leadership on this legislation and encourage my colleagues to support advancing the bill to the full committee today.
- The acceleration of telehealth has also transformed our health care system, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 30 million seniors on Medicare utilized telehealth services throughout the first few months of the pandemic, giving beneficiaries the chance to have routine health care visits from the comfort of their homes.
- Congress extended these flexibilities beyond the Public Health Emergency, but they are set to expire at the end of this year.
- I would like to thank Representative Carter for his steadfast leadership on H.R. 7623, The Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024. This legislation serves as an important guidepost to the work we're doing today.
- This policy extends the current telehealth flexibilities in our committee's jurisdiction for an additional two years and includes other reforms. While we have seen a number of positive developments in health over the past decade, not everything has been positive. We have seen an explosion in the rate of improper payments in the Medicaid program, reaching \$50 billion in improper payments in just 2022 alone.
- The Energy and Commerce Committee has done extensive work over the past several years to address these challenges, most recently considering a number of legislative solutions to stabilize the program.

- Among those ideas, we will be considering four bills that take steps to addressing key program integrity issues facing state Medicaid programs, such as increasing the frequency that State Medicaid programs check to make sure that they are not paying for deceased beneficiaries and requiring regular updates of address information for beneficiaries so that we don't pay for care for people who live out of state.
- I would like to thank Representatives Bilirakis, D'Esposito, Garcia, and Miller-Meeke for leading these bills and encourage my colleagues to support this legislation today.
- Last, but certainly not least, we will be considering legislation to support our workforce and improve access to care for Americans across the country. This includes the Accelerating Kids Access to Care Act, which will cut red tape for pediatricians, and my bill, H.R. 468, the Building America's Healthcare Workforce Act, which will help build a more robust workforce pipeline for our nation's nursing homes.
- Both bills come at a critical moment for our country. Our health care system is facing stark workforce shortages that existed before the pandemic, but have only grown more severe in recent years.
- Since 2020, over 500 nursing homes have closed across the United States and over 150,000 nurses are needed to reach pre-pandemic staffing levels.
- In closing, I would like to thank my colleagues for bringing forth the solutions we're advancing today.

- Patients, providers, and taxpayers will all greatly benefit from the important bipartisan work we are doing today.
- I yield back.