

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Hearing on “Examining Policies to Enhance Seniors’ Access to Breakthrough Medical Technologies”

September 18, 2025

Mr. Chairman, yesterday, I asked you to schedule hearings on the state of our public health system and the damage the Trump administration is doing to cancer research, childhood vaccination, and more.

I also gave each member of this committee a copy of a New York Times story describing the damage that this administration is doing to cancer research in this country. It discusses the firings at NIH, new burdens on researchers, and the horde of political appointees who are interfering with science. Former NIH Director Harold Varmus is quoted saying “We are great in science. Why would we want to destroy one of our greatest assets?” I’d like to enter that story into the record once again. I hope that everyone approaches this hearing, and our work going forward, with that story in mind.

We also need to recall that as we are working on these bills, the administration has halted funding for the Pediatric Brain Tumor Consortium, which is dedicated to trials of novel treatments for pediatric brain cancer.

And I haven’t heard a peep from my colleagues on the other side, who control this Committee’s activities. Here’s one hearing we should be having today: We should be talking about cuts to NIH, FDA, CDC, and other agencies. This committee should be examining directives from the administration that have delayed or halted critical work.

And all of us should be talking about the impact this is having on our constituents, from people who need help today to people years down the line who won’t get a cancer treatment because this administration thinks Harvard University is too liberal.

Let me be clear: I support working on these bills before us today and I hope to get them all to a good place. But we need to examine what’s happening in the real world as we consider them.

The Nancy Gardner Sewell Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act will make new cancer screening tools more accessible to seniors. Meanwhile, the NIH’s clinical center has been described to me as being in “critical shape.” And shifts in funding at the NIH mean that only 4 percent of National Cancer Institute grant applications are going to get funded this fiscal year.

The Ensuring Patient Access to Critical Breakthrough Products Act will speed Medicare beneficiaries' access to promising new medical devices. Meanwhile, yesterday Dr. Susan Monarez testified to a Senate committee that Secretary Kennedy had directed her to endorse ideological recommendations created by a sham Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), regardless of the evidence backing them up.

We are also considering a bill on national coverage determinations and local coverage determinations, tweaking the statutes associated with each. Meanwhile, the Trump administration is narrowing access to COVID-19 vaccines without any data to support the decision, and seemingly overriding career staff at FDA.

And we are considering the Expanding Access to Diabetes Self-Management Training Act, which is a good bill to help Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes take better charge of the disease. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has proposed to eliminate the National Diabetes Prevention Program at CDC; a program that is proven to help people with prediabetes avoid progression to Type 2 diabetes through lifestyle changes.

This is in addition to sweeping layoffs and program cancellations at CDC, including the gutting of the ACIP. Secretary Kennedy is undermining science, dismantling research and development in our country, and making lifesaving vaccines harder to get.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, will you hold a hearing on these cuts the week of October 6?

This majority is intent on ignoring this and protecting the people who are putting American kids in danger.