

Chairman Brett Guthrie Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Health
Lowering Health Care Costs for All Americans: An Examination of Health
Insurance Affordability
Thursday, January 22, 2026 – 9:45AM

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Chairman Griffith. And thank you to our panel of CEO witnesses for being here today.

Today's hearing will be the first in a series of hearings focused on health care affordability, and we begin by hearing testimony from our nation's top health insurance CEOs.

According to CMS, America spent \$5.3 trillion dollars on health care in 2024. That represents a staggering 18 percent of our country's gross domestic product.

Over 200 million people in the U.S. get their health insurance through the private marketplace. Of that total, around 178 million people receive coverage through their employer, and 24 million get their coverage through Obamacare.

Across these markets, health care costs have been increasing at an unprecedented rate. In the Obamacare markets, health care premium increases for 2026 were as high as 40 and 50 percent in some cases. In the employer marketplace, year-over-year cost increases for 2026 are at a 15-year high.

Despite what my Democratic friends would have the American people believe, health care affordability is far from a one-market issue. It also isn't a new issue—this committee has previously worked in a bipartisan way to pass major reforms across the health care sector to make health care more affordable for all Americans. I hope we can rise above the politics and have a real discussion about

the root causes of affordability and how we can help ALL Americans have access to more affordable care.

And that is why we have convened this panel of CEOs today, who can speak authoritatively on the market forces affecting affordability.

The goal of this hearing is to have a conversation about these rising health care costs, and your companies sit at the center of our health care financing system. Nearly every dollar spent on health care in America runs through your companies or one of your competitors. And we as a country are spending a lot on health care.

A core component of your industry's value proposition is working on behalf of Americans to lower the cost of health care, along with improving access and quality. Yet, health care costs are increasing every year, and more and more Americans have become frustrated by the feeling that their insurance is working against their health, not for it.

I want to be clear in what we expect to hear answers on today:

- As some of the largest companies in our economy and amongst the companies that benefit the most from government subsidies, how do you justify the continued skyrocketing of health care costs for your beneficiaries?
- What are you doing that is working to lower health care costs, what isn't working, and what are the barriers?
- What should insurance companies be doing better to live up to your promises to the American people?

I thank the witnesses for their participation and look forward to discussing these issues with you all today. I yield back.