

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Diana DeGette**

Hearing on “Healthier America: Legislative Proposals to Improve Public Health”

April 15, 2026

Today we are considering several bills to support prevention, early detection, and effective treatment. They target many facets of public health: from school-based health centers that provide care where students spend most of their time, to increasing awareness of Alzheimer’s, breast cancer, and tick-borne diseases.

We are also considering legislation to reauthorize a national program to connect stem cell donors with recipients and a program supporting groundbreaking research that may just lead us to a cure for ALS. These bills extend successful programs so they can continue to benefit the American people.

Take the AADAPT Act by Congressman Balderson and Congresswoman Barragan, for example, which reauthorizes Project ECHO to help primary care providers deliver high quality care to patients no matter where they live.

Primary care doctors are the clinicians most likely to catch the warning signs of dementia, after all, and the AADAPT Act will create a new focus in Project ECHO to make sure doctors around the country are trained on early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer’s Disease, which impacts more than 7 million Americans.

Take also the ACT for ALS Reauthorization Act, which puts NIH and FDA in partnership to support patient-centered drug development programs and early access to promising therapies.

Congress passed the original ACT for ALS in 2021 with overwhelming bipartisan support, and this reauthorization puts us one step closer to the cure for this debilitating disease.

These bills and more will allow the critical work of public health programs to continue and improve for years to come. Millions of students can continue to receive primary and behavioral health care at school and hundreds of thousands of patients will be matched with stem cell donors.

We will also consider legislation to give community health centers across the country new resources to provide comprehensive care to those who need it most.

This is what our constituents demand of us as the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee and as the first branch of government.

We're capable of crafting and advancing durable policy solutions to the toughest health problems, but only when we vigorously exercise the powers afforded to us in Article I of the Constitution.

That means working together to strengthen trust in our government, which requires us to honestly examine its shortcomings. It means designing innovative federal programs and demanding they be faithfully implemented.

Likewise, we cannot turn a blind eye to the policies and practices that make our country sicker and more expensive. Most of all, it means being responsive to the people we represent.

That's why I'm grateful we are joined by our witness panel today, who are true experts in their fields. These individuals have decades of patient, provider, and innovator experience among them, and are each tireless advocates for improving health in their communities and this country. I look forward to hearing their perspectives today, without which we cannot effectively legislate.

I want this Committee to live up to its storied history and return to working on not just reauthorizations, but bold reforms that will meaningfully improve lives. Because routine hearings to reauthorize programs that are bipartisan priorities are the absolute bare minimum.

When this subcommittee comes together to listen to experience and expertise, to follow the science where it leads, and protect federal programs proven to work, we live up to our constitutional mandate for the betterment of the people who sent us here.

Following almost a year and a half of rank partisanship, of ignoring the priorities of the people we represent, of zero accountability for a reckless administration, this hearing is a breath of fresh air. But this should be the rule, not the exception.

I urge swift consideration of the bills before us today and look forward to my colleagues' collaboration to reclaim and vigorously exercise Congress' authority on behalf of our constituents.