

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Member Raul Ruiz

Markup of 10 Bills, Subcommittee on Health

May 13, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As an emergency medicine physician, I have treated patients of all ages with various health conditions. I represent a Congressional district that is rural and underserved, and I have seen firsthand that there is unmet need in our communities.

I have seen patients show up in the hospital with advanced illness because they couldn't afford to go to the doctor sooner. Or they tried but there was no availability to get them in.

For our kids, it is especially critical to get timely and regular check-ups to support healthy growth and development.

That is why the school-based health center program is so important. In communities where kids might otherwise not have access to medical care, they can receive primary care, behavioral health services, and preventive screenings right at school.

School based health centers provide families with easy access to high-quality pediatric care, improving children's health, reducing school absenteeism, and helping parents minimize time off from work.

We can meet the patient where they are at. That's a game changer.

According to the National Association of Community Health Centers, Community Health Centers serve 18% of all kids in my state, but there is still insufficient access to primary care, with nearly 30% of California's children and teens not getting a preventive check-up. Investing in school based care is essential to closing this gap.

And that is why I would like to express my support of H.R.8209, the School-Based Health Centers Reauthorization Act, that was introduced by my colleagues Reps. Tonko and Balderson.

This program is instrumental in promoting healthy kids and healthy communities. They are a good location because the communities live around the schools. And if you can put FQHCs, community health centers, in schools to take care of kids, then often times they are also able to take care of their parents or their grandparents when they go and they pick up the kids with an appointment. I have seen it in my district. I have seen it in the school districts and where I serve.

May 13, 2026

Page 2

I urge my colleagues to support and move H.R.8209 in a bipartisan manner. Thank you, and I yield.