

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
Before the Committee on House Administration on Funding for the
Committee on Energy and Commerce for the 118th Congress**

March 1, 2023

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed budget for the Energy and Commerce Committee for the 118th Congress. I am pleased to join Committee Chair Rodgers here today and thank her for seeking me and my staff's input in the preparation of this proposed budget request.

As you know, the Energy and Commerce Committee has the broadest jurisdiction of any authorizing committee in Congress. It legislates on health care; biomedical research and development; food safety; clean air and climate change; safe drinking water; national energy policy; nuclear facilities; electronic communications and the internet; privacy, cybersecurity, and data security; consumer protection and product safety; and other issues.

With this broad jurisdiction, last Congress 2,515 bills were referred to the Committee, and of those 26 measures became law as a result of the Committee's work. While that number may seem low considering, most measures included a compilation of dozens of bills.

In fact, the Committee was extremely productive in the 117th Congress. All five of the major laws that were signed into law last Congress – the American Rescue Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the fiscal year 2023 omnibus package – included key provisions from the Committee.

These laws will modernize our nation's crumbling infrastructure, lower health care and prescription drugs costs, make unprecedented investments in climate action, tackle rising inflation, and boost American manufacturing and competitiveness.

We also had major bipartisan wins to combat the mental health and substance use disorder crises, keep dangerous products off the market, make communications devices more secure, and ensure drugs and medical devices are safe and effective with the reauthorization of the Food and Drug Administration's user fee programs.

These were major advancements that are going to make a real difference in the lives of the American people, and it is now critical that we ensure these legislative achievements are being implemented by the Administration as Congress intended.

Our proposed budget, which requests a 14 percent increase in funding for the Committee above fiscal year 2023 levels, will greatly assist us in fulfilling our legislative, oversight, and investigatory duties over the expansive areas within our jurisdiction.

The Energy and Commerce Committee has a long and proud history of bipartisan collaboration in the spirit of serving all Americans. In order to advance the Committee's goals, it is critical that we retain a strong and experienced staff. Over the last several Congresses, the

institution has taken tremendous steps to increase staff pay across the board -- instituting minimum annual pay of \$45,000 for junior staffers and boosting the maximum pay for senior staffers.

These pay increases are essential to attract and retain a diverse workforce that remains on Capitol Hill. In order to keep experienced staff on the Hill, we must continue to boost staff salaries to be competitive with federal agencies and the private sector. Otherwise, the legislative branch is at a distinct disadvantage, and we simply cannot allow that to happen. Longtime committee staff, who intricately know and understand the legislative history of the laws that previous Congresses have passed, are critical to ensuring that the legislative intent of these laws is known over time. This legislative history cannot be underestimated and is vitally important for both the Committee and the Congress. Staffers with investigative expertise are also critical to our oversight of the Administration and our investigative efforts of industries within our jurisdiction.

We must also ensure that the Committee staff have the tools they need to do their job. This includes access to essential technical support and subscriptions to informational resources on current affairs, policy, the law, economic trends, and technology.

I would also like to note that last Congress I made the decision to move away from an unfair and unworkable budget ratio that traditionally split the Committee budget between the majority and minority two thirds to one third, respectively. Instead, I provided the minority with 40 percent of the total Committee budget. This agreement worked well last Congress and is a more reasonable approach to the needs of both sides. I am pleased that Chair Rodgers has committed to retaining the new split this Congress.

Chair Rodgers and I will also continue to work together to reduce and consolidate our costs wherever possible and as proactively as we can, while also promoting a committee culture of accountability to and respect for the American taxpayer.

The Committee has a lot of work to do over the next two years for the American people and I firmly believe this funding request will provide us the resources we need to get the job done. I join the Chair in voicing my strong support for this budget request.

Thank you.