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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

**COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
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OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS, AND
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CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
PROTECTION

Testimony before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Member Day Hearing on Priorities in the 118th Congress

September 19, 2023

I want to thank the Energy and Commerce Committee, Chair Rodgers, and Ranking Member Pallone for the opportunity to share with you today several issues facing Mississippi's Fourth Congressional District.

Coming before this committee today, I bring with me a unique perspective on health care, shaped by my experience as a former sheriff from the great state of Mississippi. In my previous role, I witnessed the connection between public safety and health care- an experience that underscored the significant effect of quality health care on the well-being of our communities. This includes a dire need for attention to mental health, substance abuse, and the overall delivery of care.

Mental health issues and substance abuse do not discriminate; they affect every facet of our communities. Time and time again, I saw the toll these issues took, not just on individuals, but on families, our communities, our jails, and our

hospitals. It became abundantly clear that our most vulnerable communities lacked the resources necessary to address these challenges. Additionally, the continuous failure to look at these issues collectively puts the health and safety of our communities at grave risk—a risk the people of South Mississippi simply cannot afford.

I commend this committee for its longstanding bipartisan efforts to bridge the gap between these critical issues – most recently demonstrated through the SUPPORT Act reauthorization. However, we must recognize that there is still much work to be done.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the vital importance of health care in our society while showcasing vulnerabilities that warranted innovative approaches to care delivery, such as telehealth.

Telehealth has proven to be a lifeline for expanding care and providing for our most vulnerable populations. We must continue to build on this effort to grow access to care to ease the burden these crucial issues have on my district.

Mississippi has been a leader in delivery reform, standing up one of the most robust telehealth systems in the country – one that has been modeled by states coast to coast. This was a learning experience from the worst natural disaster in decades to ravage our community – Hurricane Katrina. Just like we learned from

the devastation of that dreadful storm, Congress must acknowledge the delivery reforms that led to increased access to mental health and substance use care during the pandemic. I urge the committee to continue their bipartisan efforts to expand access and explore new delivery models. And I yield back.