

Chairman Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
PAHPA, CHGME, Public Health Markup
June 27, 2018

Good morning. Today, we convene to mark up five important bills that will strengthen our public health workforce and protect our country from potential biological threats. Some of these bills will equip our health care system with the tools to maintain a robust, well-educated workforce, while the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act reauthorization bill will provide a framework for our emergency preparedness infrastructure to plan for threats such as disease outbreaks. As a physician, I have always supported programs that improve access to care and enhance the patient experience, and the bills before us today seek to accomplish that goal.

First, we are considering the draft legislation to reauthorize the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA).

From the bioterrorism threats after 9/11, to more recent public health threats to our nation, such as the Zika virus and H3N2 influenza virus outbreak, our partners at the federal, state, and local levels must have the necessary tools and resources to quickly and effectively respond when disaster strikes. To bolster their efforts, I would like to see the MISSION ZERO Act and language to improve the technological infrastructure of the BioWatch program included in the PAHPA reauthorization bill. MISSION ZERO already passed the House earlier this year with strong bipartisan support, and I expect we can reach a bipartisan consensus on both initiatives prior to the legislation's markup at the full committee.

This PAHPA reauthorization is critical in protecting the lives of all Americans. I again want to thank both Representatives Susan Brooks and Anna Eshoo for their work –and the work of their staff – on the draft legislation before us today. And I want to thank Ranking Members Green and Pallone and their staffs for working in such a great bipartisan manner to keep this important reauthorization moving forward.

Next, we will consider bills that reauthorize the physician workforce programs under Title VII and nursing workforce programs under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act. Each of these programs seeks to increase access to providers in underserved areas and promote the training opportunities for medical students and providers to maintain their skills. H.R. 3728, the Educating Medical Professionals and Optimizing Workforce Efficiency Readiness (EMPOWER) Act, which I introduced with Reps. Schakowsky and Bucshon last year, and H.R. 959, the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act, introduced by Rep. Joyce, reauthorize these important programs, both of which have expired. While Congress has appropriated funding for these programs in the past, it is essential we reauthorize these programs and ensure longer-term stability, particularly for future generations of providers.

Our medical professionals need to be adequately trained to manage patients with serious illness who are seeking either palliative or hospice care. H.R. 1676, the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act, authored by Rep. Engel, and cosponsored by many members of this committee, helps build our palliative and hospice care workforce by establishing and supporting palliative care and hospice education centers through federal grants while enhancing research in palliative care at the National Institutes of Health.

Lastly, the subcommittee will consider H.R. 5385, the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education Support Reauthorization Act, which Ranking Member Gene Green and I authored. This important legislation reauthorizes payments to CHGME programs for another five years so that our nation's children's hospitals can continue to provide education to medical school graduates and enhance pediatric research capabilities.

Children in Texas and across our country will benefit from the financial support provided by this bill, ensuring physicians have the preparation and training for the complex reality they will face in their careers as pediatricians.

Thank you to all the members who have put their hard work into these bills. I look forward to advancing these bills to the full committee.