

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

*Hearing on “Fiscal Year 2025 Department of Health and Human Services Budget”*

**April 17, 2024**

I want to thank Secretary Becerra for being with us today to discuss President Biden’s fiscal year 2025 budget request for the Department of Health and Human Services. This year, the President’s budget highlights the huge strides we made with the American Rescue Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act and the ways that we can expand those successes even further in order to reach more Americans. The President’s budget also demonstrates Democrats’ commitment to lowering the cost of health care, expanding access to care, and supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities.

The Biden Administration is working to implement important provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act that are already delivering for the American people. Medicare is now in the process of negotiating a maximum fair price for the first ten drugs selected in the Drug Price Negotiation Program. These ten drugs are taken by more than nine million seniors at a total out-of-pocket cost of \$3.4 billion in 2022. The price negotiation is going to make these drugs more affordable. Seniors who take insulin have already seen their out-of-pocket costs capped at \$35 dollars a month. And next year, Part D enrollees will have their annual out-of-pocket costs capped at \$2,000, saving beneficiaries hundreds if not thousands of dollars annually on the high-priced drugs they need to survive and thrive.

I’m pleased that the budget provides a roadmap to continue to build on the successes of the Inflation Reduction Act by increasing the number of drugs Medicare selects for negotiation each year and extending the \$2,000 annual out-of-pocket cap for prescription drugs and \$35 monthly cap for insulin to people with private insurance. The budget would also extend the Medicare inflation rebate provisions to the commercial market as well, a critical way to further hold down drug price increases.

A number of these proposals are reflected in my legislation, the Lowering Drug Costs for American Families Act that would extend the benefits of the drug price negotiation program to those with commercial insurance as well.

We have also built on the Affordable Care Act, and as a result, a record-breaking 21.4 million Americans have signed up for coverage through the ACA marketplaces. The average family is saving \$2,400 in premiums a year thanks to the expanded subsidies that Democrats delivered for the American people. I strongly support the budget’s proposal of making these expanded subsidies permanent so that American families can continue to have access to more affordable care.

The budget also addresses the Medicaid coverage gap—ensuring low-income Americans living in Republican-led states that have no insurance today can finally have access to the coverage they should already be receiving in the Medicaid program. Without question, these laws have dramatically improved access to affordable health care, and I want to commend Secretary Becerra for the tremendous progress HHS has made.

I am also pleased to see that the budget takes steps to strengthen maternal, reproductive, and child health. The budget would require all states to provide Medicaid coverage to all low-income women for 12 months postpartum. We created this state option in the American Rescue Plan, then made the option permanent, and now we need to require states to provide and maintain this coverage.

We also required states to provide 12 months of continuous coverage to children eligible for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, providing them with much-needed stability and their parents with peace of mind. The budget would build on this success by giving states the option to provide continuous coverage to children from birth until they turn age six, and 36 months of continuous coverage from there. I strongly support these proposals.

The President's budget stands in stark contrast to the plan put forward by the Republican Study Committee. This extreme Republican plan proposes to restrict access to reproductive care, including IVF and other fertility treatments. It guts funding for contraception for low-income and uninsured women and endorses a national abortion ban without exceptions.

These Republican proposals are dangerous to women's health. Make no mistake, the ripple effect of the Dobbs decision and these extreme Republican proposals will only increase maternal mortality and morbidity. They are completely out of step with the views of the majority of the American people.

Contrary to the Republican agenda, Democrats are committed to expanding access to essential health care rather than restricting it. I will continue to fight to lower health care costs and protect the health and well-being of all Americans.

Thank you again, Secretary Becerra, for being here today, and I yield back.