

Opening Remarks
Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Health Legislative Hearing: “Proposals to
Increase Medicaid Access and Improve Program Integrity”
April 30, 2024

OPENING

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Many in this Committee are familiar with my son Cole and his story.

For those unfamiliar, Cole was born with Down syndrome. Just yesterday, we celebrated his 17th birthday.

Over the past seventeen years, I’ve had the privilege of meeting countless families with kids just like Cole, and they all want the same thing...

...for their kids to have every chance in the world to succeed and live up to their God-given potential.

I’ve dedicated much of my career here in Congress to being an advocate for people with disabilities.

That’s why I’m grateful for today’s hearing...

...where we will discuss solutions to support access to long-term care for people with disabilities.

MEDICAID AND LONG-TERM CARE

The Medicaid program was designed as an important safety net for those who truly need assistance and otherwise might not get the vital care that they deserve.

Unfortunately, Medicaid doesn't always live up to this mission.

States have waitlists for home and community-based services, key long-term care services to empower people with disabilities to live independently in their communities, allowing them to reach their full potential.

I've met too many people over the years who have struggled to get off these waitlists or who have been afraid to pursue jobs out of state and risk being moved to the back of a new state's waitlists.

So, I'm pleased that we're discussing potential solutions to start making sure Medicaid is best serving those who need it most.

For example, my bipartisan legislation with Ranking Member Pallone will increase flexibility for states to offer more care by reducing these waitlists and making sure each state is tracking and reporting waitlists statistics uniformly.

We'll also discuss bipartisan legislation from Representatives Kiggans and Kaptur that would ensure coverage of home and community-based services for Medicaid-eligible dependents of active-duty military families.

As co-chair of the Military Families Caucus, I'm proud to support this legislation which would mean individuals won't lose coverage when their families move for a new assignment.

OTHER MEDICAID PROPOSALS

There are over a dozen other important pieces of legislation that will be discussed today.

We've worked closely with the Ranking Member and his team on these bills—the majority of which are bipartisan.

I recognize that not all of them are perfect in their current form.

For example, I have concerns with H.R. 8115 and how it would upend the shared state-federal partnership of the Medicaid program.

It's important though that we discuss and debate the merits of each bill today, through regular order, and continue to work in a bipartisan manner to find solutions that we can all agree on.

Today, we get the chance to change that.

MEDICAID RULES

Unfortunately, while we work to develop bipartisan legislative solutions, the Biden administration is making it more difficult for people with disabilities to access care.

By setting unattainable staffing requirements, I fear that the Minimum Staffing Rule will force nursing homes to close or reduce the number of seniors served...

...and the Medicaid Access Rule's so-called "80/20" policy will lead to home care agencies reducing the amount of care that they can provide.

Lastly, the recently finalized Medicaid Eligibility and Enrollment Rule is estimated by CMS' own actuary to increase federal

spending by tens of billions of dollars over the next five years ...

...all without Congress taking a single vote on any of the policies and in the face of widespread opposition from disability advocates and states.

In contrast, today we will begin reasserting Congress's Article One authority by taking back control of the policymaking process.

We'll consider legislation from Mr. Pence and Ms. Cammack that repeal these rules and, hopefully, avoid the negative consequences I previously mentioned.

CLOSING

This hearing is a great example of the Energy and Commerce Committee plowing the hard ground necessary to legislate with bipartisan proposals to make sure the Medicaid program is working as intended.

I look forward to today's hearing and to continuing to work together to advance these solutions.

I yield back.