

Opening Statement
Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Reauthorizing Vital Health Programs for American Families”
June 25, 2019

Today, our Subcommittee will consider four bills to reauthorize critical public health programs that support and improve the health and wellbeing of children, adults, and their caregivers.

Our Subcommittee’s focus for June has been to make sure that important health programs nearing their expiration are continued, and in some cases expanded. Last week, we held a historic hearing about the need to address expiring Medicaid funds for the territories. Earlier in June, we considered extending 12 programs that strengthen public health and the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

These hearings led to results. Last week, the House passed H.R. 3253, a bipartisan bill that extended several programs in Medicaid, including the Money Follows the Person program and the Excellence in Mental Health demonstration program. I’m grateful to Representatives Dingell and Guthrie for their work on that bill.

Today, we continue our focus by hearing testimony on four bipartisan reauthorization bills, most of which were authored by members of this Committee.

These bills support people at particularly vulnerable times in their lives: when a baby is born, during a pediatric emergency, after an autism diagnosis, or when serving as the primary caregiver for a loved one.

Members of this Subcommittee have, no doubt, experienced at least one of these vulnerable moments. I certainly have, and so have millions of Americans.

The Emergency Medical Services for Children Reauthorization Act is about peace of mind. There is nothing scarier than when a child is critically ill or injured. Parents should be able to trust that their child will receive appropriate medical care no matter what hospital they go to. This bill reauthorizes the only federal program dedicated to improving emergency medical care for children.

The Autism CARES Act expands efforts to conduct research and provide services to people who are autistic with an important focus on addressing racial disparities. Black and Latino children with autism tend to be diagnosed later than white children and are often misdiagnosed. They have less access to services and are underrepresented in most autism research. This five-year reauthorization addresses these disparities, as well as other challenges relative to autism research, education, and detection.

Finally, the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act helps support the family members who

provide full-time care to their aging or disabled loved ones.

Being the unpaid caregiver for a loved one can be physically and emotionally exhausting and isolating. The average family caregiver is a woman who works full-time and is providing care to both aging parents and children living at home. Through a five-year reauthorization of grant funds, this bill allows caregivers to take a temporary break from their caregiving responsibilities.

Today's hearing is about helping people in situations that too often are overlooked. By making sure we don't treat children as little adults, that minority children are included in autism research, that we are supporting the people, mostly women, who are taking care of their loved ones every day, we're taking important steps toward the goal of quality health care for every American.

I stand ready to work with my colleagues to make sure these programs are reauthorized.