

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Health  
Hearing on “Reauthorizing Vital Health Programs for American Families:”  
June 25, 2019

Today our Committee is reviewing four bipartisan bills that would reauthorize programs that bolster America’s medical research capacity and improve quality of life for millions of families. It’s important that we ensure that the authorizations of these programs do not expire, and I’m grateful to the many members on and off our Committee who have worked on these bills that will extend these programs.

The first bill we are examining reauthorizes the Autism CARES Act. This reauthorization is important in order to continue critical research, surveillance, education, early detection, and intervention programs for people living with Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, and their families. The legislation would also expand efforts to support all individuals with ASD across their lifespan, regardless of age. And it would encourage greater research efforts into reducing disparities among people from diverse racial, ethnic, geographic, or linguistic backgrounds.

The Committee will also review legislation reauthorizing the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act. Each year, more than 12,000 babies are born with conditions that might not be readily apparent, requiring early detection and treatment. Since it was first signed into law in 2008, this law has made great strides to ensure that all children receive recommended screening. This reauthorization bill will bring us closer to the goal of every child born in the United States receiving all recommended screening tests, ensuring better treatment and long-term health outcomes. I want to thank Representative Roybal-Allard, who has championed this program since it was first passed more than ten years ago.

While the Newborn Screening legislation ensures proper care for children from the moment they are born, the Emergency Medical Services for Children, Program ensures that children are safe and receive proper treatment if emergency care is ever required. As I’m sure our witness will attest, treating children in emergency situations can be very different from treating adults. If ever a parent or caregiver is required to call 911 to get emergency care for a child, they should know that children will receive the medical care they need. This program provides the important research and training necessary to provide quality emergency care for children no matter where they are located in the country.

Finally, the Committee will review a proposal by Representative Langevin to reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care program. This program provides much needed respite services and educational resources to family caregivers of children and adults of all ages with special needs and I urge support for its reauthorization.

I thank all of the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony. I now yield the remainder of my time to Representative Doyle, the leader of the Autism Caucus and a longtime champion of the Autism CARES Act.

Thank you.