

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Improving Access to Care: Legislation to Reauthorize Key Public Health Programs”
July 29, 2020

Today we continue this Committee’s ongoing work to improve the health and wellbeing of Americans by discussing legislation that will reauthorize five important public health programs. While we continue to prioritize the critical response to the COVID-19 pandemic that is devastating our nation, it is also essential that we continue our work to improve access to care.

Today we will hear from public health experts about what is working and what considerations this Committee should take into account as we move forward on these five bills. The first bill, H.R. 2075, the “School-Based Health Centers Reauthorization Act,” which is authored by Representatives Sarbanes, Tonko, and Upton, would reauthorize school-based health centers. These health centers are a powerful tool for achieving health equity among children and adolescents who unjustly experience disparities in outcomes because of their race and family income. The authorization for school-based health centers lapsed in 2014, and it is important that we strengthen these programs with additional federal funding.

The next bill, H.R. 4078, the “EARLY Act Reauthorization,” was introduced by Representatives Wasserman Schultz and Brooks. The EARLY Act authorizes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop initiatives to increase knowledge of breast cancer among women, particularly for women under the age of 40 and those at heightened risk for developing the disease. Breast cancer is a tragic disease that has impacted too many families and it is important that the CDC continues this work.

We will also discuss H.R. 4439, “The Creating Hope Reauthorization Act,” which is cosponsored by many Members of this Committee. This legislation, would permanently authorize the Rare Pediatric Disease Priority Review Voucher Program. While this program has provided value to some pharmaceutical companies who have made investments in rare disease programs, it also places a strain on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). We must keep that in mind and we should think carefully about whether a permanent reauthorization makes sense at this time.

Next, H.R. 4764, the “TRANSPLANT Act of 2019,” will reauthorize the C.W. Bill Young Transplantation Program. This important program provides patients who need life-saving bone marrow and umbilical cord blood transplants with information and support as they go through this process. It also maintains an efficient process for identifying donor matches, increases the number of non-familial donors available for transplant, and expands data and research to improve patient outcomes. Representatives Matsui and Bilirakis, who have authored this legislation, have worked to secure funding for this program for many years.

Finally, we have H.R. 5373, the “United States Anti-Doping Agency Reauthorization Act of 2019.” The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency is the national anti-doping organization in the U.S. for Olympic, Paralympic, Pan American, and Parapan American sports. This reauthorization will not only promote clean sport through testing, education, and research efforts, but it will also use a portion of its funding to promote a positive youth sport experience.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for joining us today, and I would like to yield the remainder of my time to Representative Sarbanes.