

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Markup of 38 Bills
September 9, 2020

Today, the Full Committee is meeting for our second fully virtual markup to consider 38 pieces of legislation. As our nation continues to suffer from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, this Committee continues its work to provide real relief to the American people.

We will begin this markup by considering three Communications and Technology bills. The first bill, the bipartisan “PHONE Act,” ensures that phone providers don’t give away residents’ phone numbers when their houses are destroyed in the wake of a natural disaster, like a wildfire or a hurricane.

Next, we will consider two bills addressing diversity in the broadcast industry. We’ll consider Representative Butterfield’s bill that would create a tax incentive for big broadcast stations to sell their stations to women and minority owners. We will also consider Vice Chair Clarke’s bill that requires broadcasters and cable companies to once again file equal employment opportunity data with the Federal Communications Commission.

We will then consider 26 health care bills that will expand access to mental health services, combat the opioid epidemic, reauthorize key public health programs, and improve Medicare enrollment. I’d like to mention a couple of them.

First, we will consider the “Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act,” which requires all health plans to cover medically necessary treatment resulting from congenital anomalies or birth defects that affect the way kids look, develop or function, often for the rest of their lives.

We’ll then consider H.R. 945, bipartisan legislation that would improve access to mental health providers in the Medicare program by covering mental health counselor and marriage and family therapist services.

As our nation continues to confront the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of Americans are reporting that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress. Substance use and overdoses also appear to be on the rise. To help address these issues, we are considering legislation to help support patients with substance use disorder and their families, help address mental and behavioral health for students, and provide mental health supports for health care providers in the emergency departments.

I am also pleased we are moving legislation today that will facilitate further research access to marijuana, as well as legislation to help address public health data sharing for our Tribes, which have seen disproportionate impacts from COVID-19.

Next, we will consider legislation to protect consumers from the flood of unsafe products entering our nation from overseas. We will also consider bills that modernize our consumer protection agencies, reduce fraud and scams, and help us better understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on home safety and tourism. And we will consider legislation meant to protect the health and safety of racehorses and jockeys.

Finally, we will also consider two bipartisan energy bills that will expand access to sustainable energy and reform the Department of Energy's management and personnel practices.

I thank both the Members and the Committee staff for all of their work to get these bills to a place today where we can advance them to the House floor with strong, bipartisan support. I encourage my colleagues to support all 38 of these bills today.