

**Opening Statement of Representative Anna G. Eshoo – 5 minutes**  
Subcommittee on Health  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
“Legislation to Improve American’s Health Care Coverage and Outcomes”  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
January 8, 2020

- Good morning and welcome to the Health Subcommittee’s first hearing of the new year.
  
- Last year, our Subcommittee was remarkably productive. We held 19 hearings and passed 31 bills, all of which had some sort of bipartisan support.
  
- Today, we will continue that progress by examining seven bipartisan bills to improve Americans’ health care and coverage.
  
- Our first panel will deal with three bills that aim to prevent the single greatest tragedy a family can experience – the death of a child.

- Among developed nations, the U.S. has one of the highest infant mortality rates. For every 1,000 live births in the United States, nearly six babies will not live to see their first birthday.
- The *Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2019* introduced by Representatives Tim Ryan and Anthony Gonzalez invests \$135 million annually to improve birth outcomes in high-risk communities by providing services to women and families before, during, and after pregnancy.
- The Healthy Start program has been proven to reduce rates of low birthweights, preterm births, and prenatal opioid exposure.
- We will also consider the *Scarlett's Sunshine on Sudden Unexpected Death Act* introduced by Representatives Gwen Moore and Tom Cole.

- We're honored to hear testimony from Scarlett's mother, Stephanie Zarecky. Thank you, Ms. Zarecky, for joining us on an unimaginably difficult day for you -- the third anniversary of Scarlett's unexplained death.
- No family should suffer the death of a child without knowing why, yet over 400 children and 3,600 infants die each year from unexplained causes.
- We will honor these children today by considering the *Scarlett's Sunshine Act*, which provides funding to improve data collection and death scene investigations related to unexpected deaths and promotes safe sleep practices.
- The third bill is the *School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act* introduced by Representatives Steny Hoyer and David Roe.

- Children should be able to go to school feeling secure that their school can handle an asthma attack or an allergic reaction. This is not the case today.
- This legislation preferentially awards children's asthma treatment grants to states whose public schools have plans for managing asthma and allergy triggers and emergencies.
- With our second panel, we will consider four bills that close damaging gaps in health insurance coverage.
- I'm proud to be an original cosponsor on the first bill, the *Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patient Act* introduced by Representative Ron Kind and Dr. Michael Burgess.
- While Medicare covers a lifetime of dialysis, kidney transplant recipients currently lose their Medicare coverage 36 months after

transplant. Without Medicare coverage for needed immunosuppressive drugs, transplant patients risk losing their new kidney.

- The legislation closes that gap by continuing coverage for kidney transplant recipients which a nonpartisan HHS analysis found would save 375 kidney transplants each year.
- The *Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act* introduced by Representatives Collin Peterson and Denver Rigglemen requires health plans to cover medically-necessary dental services related to a patient's congenital anomaly.
- About four percent of children in the U.S. are born with congenital anomalies such as cleft palate, and health plans systematically delay claims for dental-related procedures to treat them.

- This practice leaves families in debt from high out-of-pocket costs despite their paying for health insurance that should cover medically-necessary procedures.
- Our final two bills reform core pieces of the Medicare and Medicaid programs.
- The *Protecting Patients Transportation to Care Act* introduced by Representatives Buddy Carter and Tony Cardenas requires states to offer a non-emergency medical transportation benefit. Our Committee also heard from Representative Sanford Bishop about this legislation during our Members' Day panel.
- Medicaid's coverage of transportation to health services is a lifeline for patients, especially those who live in rural or underserved areas.

- Finally, the *BENES Act* introduced by Representatives Raul Ruiz and Jackie Walorski updates the Part B enrollment process for the first time in 50 years.
- It requires Medicare to notify people nearing eligibility about their rights and responsibilities, protecting beneficiaries from a lifetime of financial penalties for failure to enroll promptly.
- Today's hearing is bursting with commonsense legislation that will improve the health and care for every American, from the youngest to the oldest among us.
- I'm proud to advance these bills and to continue our record of bipartisan productivity in the new year.