

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo

Hearing on “Enhancing Public Health: Legislation to Protect Children and Families”

October 20, 2021

Today, our Subcommittee examines 12 bipartisan bills to improve the health care of the American people.

Six of the bills focus on children’s health and wellbeing.

Pediatric cancer is the number one disease killer of children in America, but it is chronically underfunded by the public and private sectors. The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0 addresses this gap by redirecting hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties currently paid by pharmaceutical, cosmetic, supplement, and medical device companies into funding for a large-scale genetic and clinical database to help researchers find insights into childhood cancer.

We’re honored to hear testimony about this bill from Gabriella’s mother, Ellyn Miller. Thank you, Ms. Miller, for joining us today, so close to the 8-year anniversary of Gabriella’s death. And thank you for her beautiful portrait you have at the table with you.

Another children’s health bill, the Children and Media Research Advancement Act authorizes the NIH to lead research on the effects of technology and media on infants, children, and adolescents. We can’t trust social media companies to do the right thing for our children. This bill provides funding for long overdue, independent research to keep media and tech companies from evading scrutiny about their impact on the development of children.

The other four children’s health bills seek to prevent and reduce the impact of stillbirth, newborn hearing loss, lead poisoning, and birth defects or anomalies. We’re fortunate to have Stacey Stewart of the March Dimes as our expert witness for these bills. For over 80 years, the March of Dimes has been a trusted advocate for the health of all moms and children in our country.

The next three bills focus on screening and prevention for lung, breast, and prostate cancer.

First, Katherine’s Law provides free coverage of lung cancer screening for individuals over the age of 40, even if they have no history of smoking. Nearly 25% of all cancer deaths in the U.S. are due to lung cancer and a growing share of lung cancer cases are occurring in never-smokers. If lung cancer in never-smokers were a separate category, it’d be in the top 10 cancers in the U.S. for sickness and death. This tragedy hit home for one of our former colleagues,

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former Congressman Rick Nolan, who lost his daughter Katherine to lung cancer even though she did not smoke. Thank you, Congressman, for being here today. It's good to see you and we look forward to hearing your all-important testimony.

The PALS Act allows for the early detection of breast cancer through free screenings for women over the age of 40 and the Prostate Cancer Prevention Act funds CDC programs to prevent and detect prostate cancer, the second most common cancer among men in our country.

Finally, we're considering two bills to improve cardiac care and a bill to improve oral health literacy.

The CAROL Act is named in honor of Carol Leavell Barr, the wife of Rep. Andy Barr, who died last year of sudden cardiac arrest. The bill funds NIH grants to support research into valvular heart disease, as well as increasing public education and awareness of valvular heart disease through the CDC.

The Increasing Access to Quality Cardiac Rehabilitation Care authorizes PAs, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists to supervise cardiac rehabilitation care so more Medicare patients can benefit from that care. Patients who receive cardiac rehab typically recover faster from heart attacks or surgery and improve their quality of life.

Through our efforts today, these 12 important, bipartisan health bills move closer from being words on a page to actually walking into the lives of our constituents to improve their health and wellbeing for decades to come.