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CHAIRMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR. | 116TH CONGRESS

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CONTACT

[CJ Young](#) – (202) 225-5735

Pallone Remarks at Health Subcommittee Hearing on 12 Health Care Extender Bills

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Health Subcommittee hearing on “Investing in America’s Health Care.”*

Today we are examining 12 pieces of legislation that make critical investments in programs supporting Medicare, Medicaid, public health, and our nation’s health workforce. It’s critical that we come to bipartisan agreement on these bills because without Congressional action many of these programs will expire on September 30th.

On our first panel, we’ll discuss several public health initiatives including three programs that play an essential role in America’s health workforce; these are the Community Health Center Fund, the National Health Service Corps, and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program.

A strong health workforce is the foundation of a strong health system. It’s essential that we continue to invest in these programs that are working to train providers and place them in communities where they’re needed the most.

Today, nearly 12,000 Community Health Centers provide essential care to millions of patients across the country. I’m grateful to my colleagues Representatives Clyburn and O’Halloran for their leadership in providing robust funding for both Community Health Centers and the National Health Service Corps, which offers loan forgiveness to health professionals who commit to provide service in medically underserved areas.

I would also like to thank Representative Ruiz for his leadership on legislation to reauthorize the Teaching Health Center program, which trains primary care residents in community-based settings such as Community Health Centers.

I'm also proud to be a longtime advocate for the Family to Family Health Information Center program and strongly support Representative Sherrill's legislation to reauthorize it. This program helps families of children with special health care needs get the information and support needed to provide the best care possible for their children.

On our second panel, we'll examine proposals related to the Medicare and Medicaid programs. We'll discuss a proposal led by Representative Engel that would permanently eliminate the cuts to hospital funding that Congress has been forced to delay year after year. Medicaid disproportionate share hospital funds, or DSH (DISH) funds, provide critical financial support to hospitals that care for some of our most vulnerable.

Without action by Congress, DSH funding will be cut by \$4 billion in October of this year. These cuts will place an incredible strain on hospitals that are already struggling to provide care to children with complex medical needs, low-income Americans, and rural communities. I commend Representative Engel for his efforts to permanently eliminate these harmful cuts.

We'll also get an update on a demonstration in Medicaid to increase access to comprehensive mental health and substance use disorder treatment through certified community behavioral health clinics. Every day, 130 people in the United States die from an opioid overdose. As our country continues to struggle through this terrible epidemic, clinics in the states participating in the demonstration have had remarkable success at improving access to care, including 24-hour crisis care. I thank Representatives Matsui and Mullin for their work to extend and expand this important program.

I'm committed to working with all of my colleagues to advance all of these important programs before the September 30th deadline. It is also my hope that we can find a way to provide longer term extensions so that those who operate or receive services from these programs have greater certainty.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today.

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