

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph R. Pitts
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining Public Health Legislation: H.R. 2820, H.R. 1344, and H.R. 1462”
June 25, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today’s hearing will examine three bipartisan public health bills to improve health care for newborns, infants and children. As many of you know, one of this subcommittee’s top priorities has been helping and protecting children and families. These bipartisan bills that are the subject of today’s hearing, represent our ongoing effort to work together to strengthen public health and solve problems in our nation’s health care system.

H.R. 2820, the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Reauthorization Act, introduced by Reps. Chris Smith (NJ) and Doris Matsui (CA), reauthorizes the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act of 2005, which provides federal support for cord blood donation and research essential to increasing patient access to transplant.

The purpose of the National Marrow Donor Program is to help save lives of patients with blood cancers, like leukemia, lymphoma, and other life-threatening diseases through adult stem cell transplants. Every four minutes, someone is diagnosed with blood cancer. In most cases, a bone marrow, cord blood, and peripheral blood stem cell transplant is the only option for a cure. 70 percent of patients do not have a donor in their family and rely upon the national registry to find a match.

The National Marrow Donor Program in my home state of Pennsylvania has already conducted 2,159 transplants as of 2014. The Transplant Centers in PA include:

- Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia
- Hahnemann University Hospital in Philadelphia
- University of Pennsylvania Medical Center in Philadelphia
- Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia
- Western Pennsylvania Cancer Institute in Homeacre
- UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in Pittsburgh
- Penn State Hershey Medical Center in Hershey
- Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- And Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh

There are 930 donors in PA. Since 1987, more than 61,000 transplants nationwide have occurred through this program.

H.R. 1462, the Protecting Our Infants Act of 2015, authored by Reps. Katherine Clark (MA) and Steve Stivers (OH), will combat the rise of prenatal opioid abuse and neonatal abstinence syndrome. In recent years, sadly, there has been a steady rise in the number of overdose deaths involving heroin. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the death rate for heroin overdose doubled from 2010 to 2012. The bill will address the growing problem and help protect newborns and infants. Additionally, this bill has a Senate companion bill, S. 799 sponsored by the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY).

Finally, H.R. 1344, the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act of 2015, authored by Health Subcommittee Vice Chairman, Brett Guthrie (KY) and Rep. Lois Capps (CA) amends the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize a program for early detection, diagnosis and treatment regarding deaf and hard-of-hearing newborns, infants, and young children.

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