

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph R. Pitts
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “21st Century Cures: The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and
Technology (PCAST) Report on Drug Innovation”
May 20, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today’s hearing relates to the 21st Century Cures Initiative announced by the Energy and Commerce Committee on April 30, 2014. This Cures effort is envisioned to explore ways to accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery cycle for new medical breakthroughs. Through this effort, Congress hopes to clear a path to find more cures and treatments while also creating jobs and keeping America as the innovation center of the world.

Shortly following the announcement of the Cures initiative, the Committee issued a white paper on May 1, 2014 entitled “21st Century Cures: A Call to Action” which more fully discusses the ideas behind the Cures project and issues a call to action – a call for ideas.

The first goal of this project is to solicit ideas. Congress does not have all the answers, but we do have a role to play in ensuring our nation’s laws and regulations keep pace and complement the biomedical research and innovation that is happening at lightning speed.

Earlier this month, we heard from the NIH, FDA, patient advocates, university leaders and other scientific pioneers about their ideas, challenges and successes. Today, we will hear from experts who contributed to the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) report on Propelling Innovation in Drug Discovery, Development, and Evaluation.

This important report hits on a number of topics that we will have to explore if we are to truly advance cures. These ideas include, among others, making sure incentives are in place to ensure capital is flowing toward research and development of new cures and designing clinical trials to the appropriate size and scale given the growth of targeted, personalized medicine.

Today we hope to learn more about these proposals and others put forth by PCAST, and determine which ideas or recommendations could potentially advance the 21st Century Cures initiative. Excitingly, the fight for faster cures in the 21st century will not only foster medical innovations, but it can also make our health care system more efficient, and can save lives.

I want to welcome our witnesses today and look forward to learning more about the advancements in biomedical research and innovation.

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