

Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Health
Markup of H.R. 1148, H.R. 2465, H.R. 2557, H.R. 3120, H.R. 3245,
H.R. 3263, and H.R. 3271
September 13, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Today, the Health Subcommittee will mark up seven bipartisan bills led by members of this Committee. The policies within each of these bills exemplify our shared commitment to strengthening the Medicare program for current beneficiaries, and improving it for future generations.

First, the committee will consider an amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 1148, Furthering Access to Stroke Telemedicine Act, introduced by Representative Griffith. Stroke is the 5th leading cause of death in the U.S. and cost associated is projected to skyrocket in the next decade. This bill will provide stroke patients expanded access to trained neurologists for timely care through the Medicare telemedicine program.

Next, we revisit an important policy that has provided people with severe degenerative diseases, like ALS and Parkinson's, with continued coverage for speech generating devices under Medicare. I commend Representatives McMorris Rodgers and Scalise for their leadership on this policy. H.R. 2465, Steve Gleason Enduring Voices Act, would remove the 2018 sunset and make coverage of these medical devices permanent.

Misdiagnosis of prostate cancer is frightening for patients who are actually cancer free, but it can also be costly. H.R. 2557, Prostate Cancer Misdiagnosis Elimination Act, introduced by Representatives Bucshon and Rush, would provide coverage for DNA Specimen Provenance Assay testing as a diagnostic tool so that the patients get the correct diagnosis the first time around.

When it comes to the value of electronic health records, great progress has been made through policies enacted in MACRA and Cures.

However, the increase of more stringent measures for meaningful use for physicians and hospitals has done little to improve the use of electronic health records or the quality of health care for patients, while increasing the need for HHS to grant more hardship waivers. Representative Dingell and I introduced H.R. 3120 to move us in the right direction by providing relief for providers and allowing HHS to be more deliberative with meaningful use.

H.R. 3245, Medicare Civil and Criminal Penalties Act, introduced by Representatives Bilirakis and Castor, would update both penalties in the Medicare program, which is long overdue.

Over the past five years, the Independence at Home Demonstration Program has provided high-need Medicare beneficiaries with home-based primary care. H.R. 3263, introduced by Representative Dingell and me, will extend this program for an additional two years so CMS has more time to assess the program's effectiveness and cost savings.

Lastly, Representatives DeGette and Brooks introduced H.R. 3271, Protecting Access to Diabetes Supplies Act, to ensure beneficiary protections under the competitive bidding program for diabetes test strips are enforced and beneficiaries are getting the diabetic testing supplies they need.

I would like to thank the members of our committee for their contributions to these bills, and I look forward to advancing them to the full committee.