

Prepared Statement of Ranking Member Richard Burr
Executive Session

May 25, 2021

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Murray for holding this markup today.

I am pleased to move these important public health and workplace priorities through the HELP Committee this morning.

These policies demonstrate the ability of this Committee to accomplish meaningful, bipartisan progress on issues that affect millions of Americans.

Bipartisan legislation takes more time and requires more effort, but the ultimate result is always better for it.

I hope that this serves as a lesson for the rest of the summer and rest of this Congress: working together in the regular order with committee process is how we get things done for the American people.

Thank you to each member of this committee that made contributions to the bills before us today.

Some of today's legislation touches on very personal aspects of health care policy – caring for mothers, supporting our health care providers, improving our own health, and strengthening the research that supports all of this work.

We are slated to approve three pieces of legislation that will improve health care for pregnant women and new mothers.

These bills take a number of approaches to improve health outcomes for moms and infants, providing training for health care providers, more support for moms in rural and hard to reach communities, and greater opportunities for working mothers.

The broad bipartisan support and leadership from this Committee for these bills speaks to the importance of this issue and the urgent need to address maternal health.

I'd like to thank Senators Smith and Murkowski for their leadership to improve rural maternal health.

Senators Warnock, Rubio, Smith, Marshall, Hassan, and Cassidy worked together to improve maternal health quality and outcomes.

Senators Merkley and Murkowski developed the PUMP Act to provide reasonable accommodations in the workplace for nursing mothers.

The legislation named for Dr. Lorna Breen tackles the extreme stress our health care providers face in seeing life and death each day, by making sure health care providers have the mental health support they need.

Dr. Breen dedicated her to life helping others, and she is still doing so today as her family works tirelessly to shine a light on a tragic problem that existed before and has been made worse by the pandemic.

I thank Senators Kaine and Young for their leadership, as well as Senators Cassidy, Baldwin, Collins, Smith, and Murkowski for their support and work to advance this bill.

Along with caring for those on the front lines, today's docket includes new tools for the public health agencies that provide the resources necessary to advance our health care for the future.

The legislation that strengthens the NIH Foundation and FDA's Reagan-Udall Foundation will allow these agencies to be better partners in research, providing more hope and more options for our health care providers and our families tomorrow.

Senators Lujan, Romney, and Collins worked to ensure that this bill received broad bipartisan support, and I thank them for their efforts.

Finally, we are also marking up legislation written by Senators Wicker and Brown that is designed to help us improve our own health through up-to-date recommendations on physical activity.

Physical activity is key to improved health outcomes over the long term.

I encourage my staff to participate in the annual fitness challenge here in Congress, and we have been among the topped ranked teams for the last few years.

I'd like to think that's mostly because of my personal coaching efforts.

Chair Murray, thank you and your staff for your work on each of these bills before us today.

I look forward to supporting these important pieces of legislation in the committee and to working together to move them through the Senate.