

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Mark DeSaulnier (CA-10)**

Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Hearing

*"Bad Medicine: Politics, Unions, and Antisemitism in Health Care"*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank all the witnesses for joining us today.

I would like to begin by saying that no one should be threatened, harassed, or assaulted because of who they are, who they worship, or what they stand for. We must do more to combat antisemitism in this country and ensure that all Americans are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

When it comes to health care, patients and providers must be able to rely on a safe environment free from discrimination. If that is what has motivated this hearing, I think we would be able to come together in a bipartisan manner and discuss solutions. But I fear that yet again, the majority is weaponizing the issue of antisemitism to attack groups they disfavor, like labor unions.

Today marks the eleventh time in the last three years we have held committee activity to address antisemitism. Committee Democrats want to meaningfully address hate and discrimination. However, after nearly a dozen hearings, it is abundantly clear that Committee Republicans have no interest in addressing this issue in good faith or discussing an effective response. Instead, the majority has weaponized this issue for their political objectives rather than tackle anti-Jewish animus in a serious and enduring way. As I've said many times before, and other people on our side have said, we are willing to work with you on that issue.

If my colleagues were serious, they would call out the leader of their own party—President Trump—who has made antisemitic statements himself and emboldened right-wing extremists to spew hate with not only impunity, but with celebration. At the same time, the Majority would also hold hearings to address racism, xenophobia, sexism, Islamophobia, or similar harms that Americans face. On both counts, Committee Republicans have been silent. Even more critically, this Committee has stood on the sidelines while the Administration has dismantled the lead civil rights agencies responsible for investigating discrimination and protecting patients, health care workers, and medical students. The silence is deafening and telling.

Hate cannot be tolerated anywhere, including in unions. However, it is irresponsible and unproductive to take the words and actions of a few and broadly categorize labor unions as fostering discrimination. I want to remind my colleagues that the labor movement is a large, diverse coalition of workers, including Jewish Americans, many of whom have been very prominent in the American labor movement. It has been a significant force in the battle against antisemitism and other forms of hate throughout its history — not without its challenges, like America as a whole.

At the end of the day, the fight against discrimination in health care is not separate from the fight for affordable care. When entire communities face barriers to quality care, costs rise, preventable conditions go untreated, and working families bear the burden. Our health care system should work for everyone, regardless of who they are

or where they come from. Our Committee has a real opportunity to improve access to health care, make care more affordable, and address inefficiencies in the health care system that cost patients both their economic security and their lives.

However, the Trump Administration has taken the problems that patients and health care workers face and made them demonstrably worse. Since President Trump returned to office, his Administration and Congressional Republicans have waged relentless attacks on the health and well-being of the American people, particularly the most vulnerable Americans. Republicans have failed to meaningfully lower drug costs, and thanks to their 'Big, Ugly Bill' and failure to extend the *Affordable Care Act's* enhanced premium tax credits, millions of Americans have seen their health care premiums skyrocket. At the same time, President Trump's reckless economic policies and foreign wars have exacerbated a cost-of-living crisis, in which one-third of Americans could not afford a \$400 emergency expense. I think everyone here knows that a medical crisis costs a lot more than \$400.

Trump Administration policies and this Congress's inaction have also harmed our ability to address discrimination for both workers and patients. Multiple agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, have slashed programs and research that they deemed to be "too woke" and banned words such as Black, disability, trauma, accessible, and mental health. How are we supposed to stop discrimination if we aren't allowed to describe it?

These policies have not made Americans, including Jewish Americans, healthier or safer. Instead, Americans are forced to scrape the bottom of the barrel and skip doctors' appointments to avoid crushing medical debt. The leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States is medical debt. We should be addressing that. Democrats are committed to protecting people from hate and discrimination and providing safe, affordable health care so that all Americans can access the care they need.

I look forward to today's discussion and continue to look forward, Mr. Chairman, to working with you in a principled way to address discrimination in America. I yield back.