

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 3453, *Empower Charter School Educators to Lead Act*

H.R. 2516, *Accreditation for College Excellence (ACE) Act of 2025*

H.R. 4054, *Accreditation Choice and Innovation Act*

H.R. 2528, *Association Health Plans Act*

H.R. 2571, *Self-Insurance Protection Act*

H.R. 2988, *Protecting Prudent Investment of Retirement Savings Act*

H.R. 3170, *Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, June 25, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, today, we will consider seven bills, six of which I am concerned are at odds with the priorities of America's students, workers, and families. When I am home in my district, I speak with constituents, and they tell me they want better public education for their children, access to affordable, quality health care, and the ability to work and retire with dignity and security. Not only do these bills fail to accomplish those goals, but many take us in the opposite direction.

First, we will consider H.R. 3453, the *Empower Charter School Educators to Lead Act*, which builds on school choice efforts similar to the ones included in the House Republicans' "Big Ugly Bill." H.R. 3453 expands pre-planning grants for charter schools—which are already permitted under current law—but the bill does not require grantees to have applied to a charter authorizer, whose role it is to assess the quality and potential of existing charter schools. This will lead to even *less* transparency and accountability, exposing our nation's students to low-quality educational experiences.

I cannot understand why it would be a good idea to undermine guardrails for charter schools, despite numerous non-partisan audits identifying accountability and transparency issues that lead to clear and identifiable instances of waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayers' dollars. I oppose this bill because it undermines the *already* limited oversight of charter schools to the detriment of students.

Next, H.R. 2516 and H.R. 4054 would weaken the accreditation process for institutions of higher education and open the floodgates for colleges to evade federal oversight. Specifically, the bills undermine the ability of accreditors to assess quality and could result in a limitation of academic freedom in college curricula.

H.R. 2516 prohibits accreditors from developing standards regarding specific partisan political, ideological viewpoints, or beliefs. By using vague, undefined terms, the bill's sponsors claim that H.R. 2516 will prevent accreditors from evaluating schools on their diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility practices. However, due to its vagueness, H.R. 2516 would unnecessarily politicize accountability measures for colleges and universities. This bill could call into question whether an accreditor could even ask if an environmental studies program had

classes on climate change, or whether a history department faculty could teach that President Joe Biden won the 2020 election. And H.R. 4054 would make it easier for low-quality programs to evade accountability by “shopping around” for accreditors. The end result of both bills would weaken the accreditation process that could mislead students about the quality of the colleges or their programs.

Next, the two health bills under consideration today would continue the Republicans’ quest to repeal or undermine the *Affordable Care Act* (ACA) and make it harder for working families to access affordable, high-quality insurance.

H.R. 2528, the *Association Health Plans Act*, recycles past attempts to sabotage the ACA. Association health plans might lower premiums for *some* enrollees, but they do so by skimping on benefits and increasing costs for others. Association health plans (AHP) enroll young, healthy people to form a separate pool that charges lower premiums. I oppose this bill because it leaves everybody else to pay, on average, higher premiums while the privileged few get to sneak out the back door and pay less. And if too many in the low-cost health plan get sick, they have to charge higher premiums, and the AHP can collapse. Then, that group just rejoins the ACA marketplace, which in effect has provided backup coverage for those paying lower rates. That’s unfair to everyone else who had been paying higher premiums all along.

Similarly, H.R. 2571, the *Self-Insurance Protection Act*, attempts to unravel the ACA by allowing companies, through the use of “stop loss” insurance, to evade critical consumer protections in their health care plans. When subject to appropriate guardrails, stop loss plans can mitigate risk for self-insured group plans. However, stop loss plans are now increasingly designed to mimic health insurance, while not adhering to rules that apply to everyone else. I oppose this bill because it would make it virtually impossible for both states and the federal government to protect consumers who end up in these plans.

These bills need to be considered in light of the action that Congress is actually considering, such as the refusal to extend the enhanced premium tax credits under the *Inflation Reduction Act*, which lowered the ACA premiums, the Medicaid cuts in the “Big Ugly Bill” that will result in 11 million fewer Americans on Medicaid in order to fund tax breaks for the wealthy, and the Trump Administration’s recent ACA Marketplace rule, which makes it harder to get coverage. We should be eternally vigilant because the ACA is always in serious danger of being totally repealed. So I encourage my colleagues to vote no on both of those health proposals.

The next bill, the so-called *Protecting Prudent Investment of Retirement Savings Act*, is premised on the Republicans’ mistaken view that politicians know best when it comes to investing workers’ retirement savings.

The bill codifies two rules from the first Trump Administration that imposed first-of-their-kind restrictions on retirement plan fiduciaries’ ability to consider environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors when making investments and exercising their shareholder rights. Both rules also imposed needless paperwork and recordkeeping restrictions on these professionals.

Considering the ESG factors should not be controversial, because they cannot be considered if investment returns would be reduced. We should be trusting the retirement plan professionals, who are bound by law to make prudent investment decisions on behalf of plan participants.

The bill also undermines efforts to increase diversity among asset managers. According to the GAO, only 1.4 percent of the \$82 trillion in global assets under management is managed by women- or minority-owned firms. So I oppose this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

The final bill we will consider is H.R. 3170, the *Improving Access to Workers’ Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act*, led by you, Mr. Chairman, and the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Courtney. This bill was reported out of Committee in the last two Congresses and actually passed the floor in the 117th Congress.

This bill will amend the *Federal Employees Compensation Act* (FECA) to ensure that injured federal employees, particularly in rural areas, get the care they need from state-licensed physician assistants and nurse practitioners for their work-related injuries. It is important to note that this does not override state laws – they can only provide services within the scope of practice provided under state law. However, in many areas, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are already providing care under state compensation laws, and those services should also be available to federal employees seeking care.

This bill is an important step to modernize federal workers' compensation without compromising the rights of injured workers to receive an adequate remedy for their injury. Unfortunately, it comes at a time when the Trump Administration's efforts to shrink the Department of Labor have shut down injured federal workers' ability to have their hearings when their services and benefits are denied. But this bill is definitely a step in the right direction.

For these reasons, I oppose the majority of the bills we are considering today, and I encourage my colleagues to do so as well.

Thank you, and I yield back.