

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Scott (VA-03)

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 824, *Telehealth Benefit Expansion for Workers Act of 2023*

H.R. 3941, *To prohibit the use of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary school facilities to provide shelter for unlawfully present aliens, and for other purposes*

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Tuesday, June 13, 2023 | 4:00 p.m.

Thank you, Dr. Foxx.

I am disappointed that, yet again, we've decided to take up two bills that do nothing to support students or improve access to affordable, quality health care for workers and families.

In fact, so far this Congress, Committee Republicans' priorities for K-12 education have focused entirely on culture wars. Legislation has passed to ban books, single out trans students, and target immigrants.

Today, more of the same. Not only would H.R. 3941 prohibit the use of school facilities to house immigrants—it would also strip funding from schools and colleges that do not follow the Republican agenda.

June is Gun Violence Prevention Month. Yet, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle continue to bury their heads in the sand and deny the reality that gun violence is the leading cause of death for our nation's children. Instead, they have reimagined that immigrants seeking shelter are the cause of unsafe schools.

If my colleagues want to keep students safe, let's focus our time on what is *actually* killing them, and that's guns. Parents, teachers, and students are *begging* us to take meaningful action. But, unfortunately, we haven't made any progress on this subject.

Today, we are also marking up legislation that would undermine quality health care coverage for workers and families by eroding important consumer protections under the *Affordable Care Act* and *Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act*.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that, with proper guardrails, telehealth can be a useful tool for delivering health care when integrated with a comprehensive plan that ensures access to in-person care.

Unfortunately, the *Telehealth Benefit Expansion for Workers Act*, H.R. 824, would fragment care while failing to provide appropriate safeguards for consumers. It allows employers to carve out telehealth from their group plans and offer it as a separate, standalone policy that is exempt from important consumer protections under the ACA and other laws. This includes protections like the prohibition on annual and lifetime limits and the requirement for parity between behavioral health care and medical and surgical care.

In addition, I am concerned that, under this bill, consumers could be exposed to deceptive marketing practices where workers enroll in telehealth-only plans under the impression that they are receiving far more comprehensive

coverage than they actually are. Similar deceptive marketing practices have already been documented with the sale of other forms of so-called “excepted benefits”.

So, I am in favor of innovating ways to lower health care costs and expanding access to critical health services. But, unfortunately, H.R. 824 takes us in the wrong direction.

Our constituents are counting on us to deliver meaningful solutions to the serious challenges facing the country: that is gun violence in schools that continues to take the lives of children and educators, rising cases of child labor violations, and the continued attacks on Americans’ access to reproductive care and affordable health care.

Unfortunately, if today’s markup is any indication, the Majority appears intent on ignoring these challenges and, instead, continuing with the culture wars.

I urge my colleagues to oppose these bills, and I yield back the balance of my time.