



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions
Markup of H.R. 3, *Lower Drug Costs Now Act of 2019*
October 17, 2019**

(As prepared for delivery)

“The rising costs of prescription drugs in America is an issue that impacts families, workers, patients, and households across this great nation.

If we are going to address this problem, we need to set aside party politics and enact bold solutions.

Under Republican leadership at the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, of which I’m also a member, we worked on bipartisan bills to address the cost and transparency of prescription drugs. In 2016, Congress passed the 21st Century Cures Act, bipartisan legislation that I cosponsored which accelerated discovery and development of new cures and treatments, giving patients faster access to life-saving drugs. Then the FDA Reauthorization Act of 2017 was signed into law leading to the approval of nearly a thousand different brand-name drugs. This gave FDA additional resources to combat price hikes by bringing competition into the market and empowering patients with choice.

Instead of continuing this bipartisan work, Speaker Pelosi has ignored Member input and abandoned the regular Committee process in favor of a political ploy to appease her radical, far-left base.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce rightly argues: ‘By imposing government price controls on prescription drugs, H.R. 3 will reduce investments in medical research, put at risk over 700,000 American jobs, and potentially shift cutting-edge medical research to foreign countries, like China.’

The legislation before us today, H.R. 3, is a deeply flawed partisan drug-pricing scheme that will jeopardize patients' access to new cures and treatments. And the amendment we are considering actually makes this bad bill even worse. By making this bill even more extreme, the Democrats are stripping patients and families of choices and treatments to apparently appease a group of far-left members.

Among many of the radical and troubling policy failures in H.R. 3, the most concerning is the promotion of an unprecedented amount of government interference in private market negotiations, which will eliminate choice and competition in our healthcare system. Additionally, investment in research and development for future treatments would be significantly jeopardized, putting breakthrough cures for diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, sickle cell disease, and others at risk.

Countries around the world that have adopted drug-pricing systems like those included in H.R. 3 have not reaped the benefits that Democrats claim this bill would provide. In fact, they face decreased access to innovative new medicines, increased wait times for treatment, and supply shortages for in-demand drugs. We can and must do better.

In the past, Democrats and Republicans have come together to work in a bipartisan manner to tackle this issue, but during a time of unparalleled political divide, my colleagues have decided to pursue politics over progress.

The markup of this socialist agenda drug-pricing scheme is another example of the Committee Democrat's focus on radical proposals, including one-size-fits-all mandated minimum-wage hikes, trial-lawyer rewards, restrictions on worker choice and freedom of speech, and heavy-handed government intervention targeting small businesses.

Advancing H.R. 3, Speaker Pelosi's socialist agenda drug-pricing scheme will hurt the development of cures and treatments and—more importantly—people's lives. It is a disservice to those who have elected us to be their voice in Congress.

I'll close by repeating what the Committee's Republican Leader, Rep. Foxx, said during her opening statement, "Republicans stand ready to work with Democrats to push for legislation that promotes competition, lowers out-of-pocket costs for consumers, and establishes transparency and accountability in drug pricing."

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