

**Opening Statement
Ranking Member Val B. Demings**

Hearing on “Regulatory Reform Task Forces Check-In Part II”

November 14, 2017

I would like to thank Chairmen Palmer and Jordan for holding this important hearing today on agency regulatory reform task forces. I would also like to thank our three witnesses for testifying.

Regulatory review and reform need not be a partisan exercise. President Obama, too, created a retrospective review process in 2011 to review outmoded, ineffective, insufficient, or excessively burdensome regulations.

But the Trump administration is not taking an honest look back. The Trump regulatory review process is aimed at removing regulations that protect the public, including student loan borrowers, those in need of health insurance, and meat processing workers.

The regulatory reform task force at the Department of Health and Human Services is undermining the Affordable Care Act to make it harder for average Americans to get health coverage. They undermined the open enrollment period by unnecessarily shortening the time for enrollment, reducing the number of individuals providing enrollment assistance, and cutting the advertising budget by 90 percent. And even when individuals are able to buy health insurance, the regulatory reform task force has proposed allowing states slash what the plans actually cover.

The task force at the Department of Agriculture is speeding up production lines in poultry and hog slaughter facilities and reducing the number of inspectors required to be on site. High speed production lines have been shown to be injurious to the health of workers, and potentially lead to contamination of meat products consumed by the American public.

The task force at the Department of Education is actively rolling back regulations meant to protect the next generation of K-12 and higher education students. They are obstructing the Gainful Employment Rule, meant to ensure that college students taking out loans will receive an education enabling them to get higher paying jobs, by stopping the necessary data collections that would make the rule operate. They have halted the Borrower Defense Rule, which created a process for defrauded borrowers to apply for loan forgiveness to which they are legally entitled, and protected American taxpayers by requiring the riskiest schools to set money aside to cover the cost of loan forgiveness, rather than requiring the public to bear the burden of fraud.

The Department of Education has also been rolling back several Title IX regulatory guidance documents, which permit schools to make it much more difficult for victims of sexual assault to obtain justice, and causing confusion about whether transgender students have any legal protections at all.

This is all very, very concerning to me, and to the American public. During today's hearing, I hope we will be able to get to the bottom of what these three agencies are doing.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, and thank the Chairmen for holding this important oversight hearing.