

Chairman Andrews. Ladies and gentlemen, the subcommittee will come to order.

We want to welcome everyone to the subcommittee, which has been rechristened the Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee. We are delighted that you are all here with us.

I want to say to my colleagues on the committee that I am humbled and honored to have the chance to work with you and lead the subcommittee. I hope to be worthy of your confidence and trust.

One of the very first things that I did when I was given this opportunity was to meet with my friend and colleague, Congressman Kline from Minnesota, who will serve as the Republican ranking member. He and I have worked together on this committee as well as the Armed Services Committee. And I feel honored to have a chance to work with someone for whom I have so much respect.

And it is our mutual agenda that we will conduct the business of the subcommittee fairly and in a way that benefits the people that we all represent. There will certainly be times when we have vigorous disagreements, but I am committed and I know Congressman Kline is committed to the notion that we will pursue any disagreements in a civil, fair and responsible way. And where possible, we will find ways to work together.

I believe that this morning is a hearing that will focus on one of those ways where working together is very much within our reach. Our subcommittee is given responsibility for the issues that arise out of Americans in the workplace, whether it is their health insurance while they are working or retired, whether it is the nature of their employment relationship with their employer, the relationship between collective bargaining organizations and employers or the area of pension benefits for people, whether they are in a union or not, whether they are management, labor or what have you.

This is a large responsibility that we have been given. And I believe that when Speaker Pelosi took the gavel from the former chairman of this subcommittee, Mr. Boehner, and said that she wanted to proceed in the spirit of partnership rather than partisanship that today's hearing marks the first effort of what I hope will be many by our subcommittee to proceed in that spirit.

I believe there is an emerging bipartisan consensus addressing the issues that we will address this morning that we are so honored to have Chairwoman Slaughter and Congresswoman Biggert here to talk about.

I think there is a consensus in our country that when a person goes to apply for a job that he or she should not be denied the job because their family has a history of diabetes. I think there is an emerging consensus in the country that when a woman is working for a company that she shouldn't have to pay more for her health insurance than her peers because there is a family history of breast cancer in her family.

I think there is an emerging consensus in the country that no person should be told they are going to get fired if they don't agree to a genetic test. I think there is an emerging consensus in the country that if you have taken a genetic test and there is genetic information out there available to you, the information should only be given to people to whom you consent that it be given. And the tests should only be taken under circumstances in which you consent.

These principles were included in legislation which was identical to the legislation Ms. Slaughter and Ms. Biggert are talking about today, approved by the Senate 98-to-nothing. President Bush has strongly indicated that he is in support of these principles. So I

think this is an excellent place for us to start our efforts to find ways that we can work together and improve the conditions of Americans in the workplace.

We are looking forward to the testimony this morning.

At this point, what I would like to do is to yield to my friend and colleague, the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Kline.