

Rep. Murphy Speech, Ways and Means Committee Markup of the Build Back Better Act

September 9, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move to strike the last word.

We've been charged with writing important pieces of the bill that will become the Build Back Better Act. I care deeply—both personally and professionally—about a number of the legislative proposals we've crafted, like paid family and medical leave, access to child care, retirement security, and health profession opportunity grants.

More broadly, I recognize that, in order to help working families, Democrats must advance these and other proposals through the reconciliation process because of Republican obstruction.

It's critical we legislate in a thorough and transparent way, even though—and I think especially because—Democrats are proceeding on our own. Process matters, because I want my constituents to have faith in what I'm doing and because a good process makes it more likely we will produce a good bill that can become law.

Yet, to date, I have only received the text of Subtitle A through Subtitle E. As far as I'm aware, our committee has not received official CBO scores of these subtitles, with the exception of Subtitle B, which involves retirement policy.

Even more concerning, we have not received the remaining subtitles or the scores associated with them. In fact, I don't even know how many more subtitles there will be.

For example, we haven't seen the subtitle on prescription drug policy, or the subtitle that will strengthen tax incentives to promote clean energy and combat climate change.

Nor have we seen the revenue subtitle that will pay for all of this.

So, as we begin the multi-day markup of this historic legislation, I don't know how much we're spending, how much we're raising, how we're spending some of the money, and how we're raising any of the money.

I want to emphasize that I don't blame the chairman, or this committee, for the current situation. We were given an artificial deadline by which to craft and mark up a bill. I believe this deadline was too rushed, driven by politics rather than policy.

We need more time to get this process right. A little more time to ensure we have all of the subtitles, not just some of them. A little more time to make sure we have official scores for all the subtitles, not just unofficial scores for some of them.

So, despite this committee's extraordinary efforts, I find myself in an impossible position.

I cannot properly evaluate the investments in Subtitles A through E, however worthwhile they appear in isolation, with the incomplete information I have. I cannot assess them if I don't know how we're paying for them. I cannot pass judgment on them if I don't know what trade-offs we're making—that is, what other items were excluded in order to include them. I don't think we can afford to do everything. As a legislator, I have to prioritize and make tough choices.

I don't think it's asking too much to want to see this bill in its entirety before voting on any part of it. I think that's asking for the absolute minimum—especially when we are proposing to create or change programs that will affect my constituents at every stage of their lives.

For this reason, and unless something changes, I have no choice but to vote "no" on each subtitle and on final passage.

This is frustrating and disappointing because I have consistently supported use of reconciliation to help the American people.

I'm trying to do the right thing here, but I believe we have to do it the right way.

I remain optimistic that I will ultimately be able to vote for a targeted reconciliation bill containing many of our shared priorities. I pledge to continue working to get this package to a place where I can support it, where it can pass both chambers, and where it can be signed by the President.

After all, it is only the bills that become law that improve the lives of our constituents and make our great nation even greater.

Thank you.