

Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
*Subcommittee on Criminal Justice,
Drug Policy and Human Resources*
MGH Part II
Opening Remarks
7.7.04

Once again I would like to thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Cummings for calling attention to this important topic.

This follow up hearing today is very important for two main reasons. First, it allows us to revisit this topic and discuss the steps Maryland General Hospital has taken in the interim to address the problems its lab experienced. We need to make sure the plan MGH is in the process of implementing is accurate in design and scope. Both the employees and patients of MGH deserve the best lab environment to ensure the community is receives the quality of care they deserve. I look forward to today's testimony and hearing an update on these critical concerns.

Second, returning to this topic allows us to look nationwide and consider what Congress can do to protect labs throughout the country. Quite frankly, in light of all that has happened, MGH is probably one of the best places to have your lab tests performed today. But I worry about labs elsewhere. What we learned in the first hearing and what still needs to be addressed is how we will ensure that this problem does not happen again in another lab.

It is this second question that prompted me to request an analysis from the Congressional Research Service in May 2004 outlining the questions raised in the first hearing, the background involved, and the questions Congress should be considering to assure quality in clinical labs. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to have the CRS memo inserted in the record as part of my opening statement.

The questions raised by CRS cover several categories. These include defining the scope of the problem, oversight and coordination, and compliance and enforcement. I encourage my colleagues to consider this memo as we explore legislation options to address this important issue.

I thank the witnesses for appearing today and look forward to their testimony. Thank you Mr. Chairman.