AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 116–57

OFFERED BY MR. BERA OF CALIFORNIA

At the end of title XIII, add the following new section:

SEC. 13__. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING BIOLOGICAL THREAT REDUCTION AND COOPERATIVE BIOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION PROGRAM.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) keeping Americans safe means ensuring that global health security is prioritized as a national security issue;

(2) as highlighted by the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States, biological threats, whether “deliberate attack, accident, or a natural outbreak”, are growing threats and “require actions to address them at their source” through programs carried out by cooperative engagement, such as working “with partners to ensure that laboratories that handle dangerous pathogens have in place safety and security measures”;
(3) the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States appropriately affirms the importance of supporting advancements in biomedical innovation while mitigating harm caused by advanced bio-weapons and capabilities;

(4) the intrinsically linked nature of biological threats, whether naturally occurring, accidental, or deliberate, underscores the relationship between the Global Health Security Strategy of the United States and the National Biodefense Strategy, and the national security tools used to prevent and mitigate these threats must be similarly connected;

(5) biological threats are a critical emerging threat against the United States and addressing these threats through cooperative programs is an opportunity to achieve long-standing nonproliferation goals;

(6) cooperative programs to address biological threats through improved global capacity in the areas of biosafety, biosecurity, bio-surveillance, research oversight, and related legislative and regulatory frameworks have become even more important as the world faces increasing availability of and advancements in biotechnology, which has broad dual-use and proliferation implications;
(7) under the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program of the Department of Defense established under the Department of Defense Cooperative Threat Reduction Act (50 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.), Congress authorized the Secretary of Defense to address such threats through activities to prevent, detect, and report on highly pathogenic diseases or other diseases, “regardless of whether such diseases are caused by biological weapons”;

(8) in 2014, President Obama declared the Ebola virus disease epidemic a national security priority and exercised the authority under such Program to build capacity that mitigated the imminent threat posed by the Ebola virus disease and established capabilities required to prevent future outbreaks;

(9) many of the prevention, detection, and response capacities built in response to the Ebola virus disease epidemic are also those used to prevent, detect, and respond to the use of biological weapons abroad;

(10) continuing to use cooperative engagement programs is in the national security interests of the United States because of the important relationships established between the United States and partner
countries, which are based on ideals such as transparency, information sharing, and a shared responsibility in advancing global security;

(11) the recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID–19) global pandemic has illustrated the dire consequences resulting from a single disease that knows no boundaries, impacting the United States economy and the health of United States citizens and members of the Armed Forces, both domestically and abroad;

(12) in light of the impacts caused by COVID–19, and following two congressionally mandated reports that call for better implementation of the biological cooperative engagement programs of the United States and the National Biodefense Strategy (the report published by the Government Accountability Office on March 11, 2020, titled “National Biodefense Strategy: Opportunities and Challenges with Early Implementation” and the report published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine on April 14, 2020, titled “A Strategic Vision for Biological Threat Reduction: The U.S. Department of Defense and Beyond”), it is of utmost importance that such programs are
given due and increased prioritization for national security purposes; and

(13) the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State should make every effort to prioritize and advance the determination, concurrence, and notification processes under the Department of Defense Cooperative Threat Reduction Act (50 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.) to provide for necessary new country determinations in a timely manner and be responsive to emerging biological threats.