

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Health  
Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2020 HHS Budget”  
March 12, 2019

Last year, President Trump and Congressional Republicans passed a deficit busting \$2 trillion tax cut for the wealthy and corporations. At that time, we all knew who would take the hit when it came time for the Administration to produce a budget. And now, President Trump proposes a sham of a budget that sticks it to average working Americans across the board.

A budget is a reflection of priorities, and this budget makes clear that ensuring all Americans have access to quality health care is not a priority for this Administration. The proposed budget for HHS cuts \$1.4 trillion dollars in essential health care programs that are critical to working families and to seniors across the nation. Under President Trump’s leadership, HHS has played a major role in policies to sabotage the Affordable Care Act, slash funding for Medicaid, restrict access to women’s contraception, and separate families at the border. This is a devastating record for an agency whose mission is to advance the health and well-being of all Americans.

The FY 2020 budget continues this sabotage by reviving the failed Graham-Cassidy ACA repeal proposal, which would lead to tens of millions of Americans losing their health insurance and would undermine protections for people with pre-existing conditions.

The President’s budget also continues the Administration’s assault on the millions of hardworking families that rely on Medicaid for health insurance -- proposing \$1.5 trillion in cuts to Medicaid. It also continues the Administration’s illegal efforts to kick vulnerable Americans off Medicaid through work requirements, lock outs, and red tape.

This misguided budget also includes over \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare, putting health care for our seniors at risk.

These are severe and extreme health care cuts for hardworking middle-class families, seniors and our most vulnerable. This is a sham of a budget that has absolutely no chance at ever becoming a reality, but it shows this Administration’s values are not the values of everyday Americans.

In addition to explaining the cruel cuts made by this budget, Secretary Azar will need to account for HHS’s role in implementing the Trump Administration’s disgraceful and cruel policy of family separation. This policy has caused so much pain and trauma for thousands of children and it’s clear that children are still wrongly being separated from their parents.

Finally, Secretary Azar will also have to answer for HHS’s lack of cooperation with this Committee’s oversight requests. Over the last two months, this Committee has attempted to work with HHS in good faith in asking for information on a variety of topics from the ACA to the Administration’s family separation policy. We are requesting important information that is critical to our ability to conduct oversight of this administration. HHS has been largely

unresponsive to our requests. Our patience is wearing thin. If Secretary Azar can't commit to providing us all of the information we have requested, we are prepared to take additional steps to make sure that we get the information that we need to conduct this necessary and long overdue oversight.

Thank you, I yield back.