

Opening Statement  
Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo  
Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Hearing on “Protecting Scientific Integrity in the COVID-19 Response”  
May 14, 2020

I never thought I would be holding a hearing under these sad circumstances, but it is a necessary one.

Our country is in pain.

Americans are afraid, sick, hungry, and jobless, and over 80,000 souls have been lost. And the government that was supposed to protect them, has failed.

Heroes have risen... extraordinary / ordinary Americans showing courage, compassion, and a sense of self-sacrifice and duty beyond what could have, or should have been asked of them.

Regular Americans have risen when their leaders have not.

We are the greatest country on earth, and yet we have the most cases and the most deaths from COVID-19 of any nation in the world.

Why?

First is the inept, ineffective, and extremely late effort to respond to what was clear to many scientists and public health experts in January. That basic delay has cost precious lives, and is continuing to cost lives.

We can't have a system where the price paid is unconscionable - mothers losing daughters, daughters losing fathers because of incompetence, denial, delay, and a disorganized response.

I'm tired of those who bear the greatest responsibility accepting none of it, while deflecting blame on others - the previous Administration, the World Health Organization, the Wuhan Lab - anywhere but where the blame belongs.

Second, the United States has and remains dangerously dependent on foreign countries for our supply of critical, lifesaving drugs, and lifesaving equipment - masks, gloves, PPE, and ventilators.

As a result, we can't treat our own people without relying on China and others to supply us.

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We can't outfit our first responders, our hospital workers, our doctors. We can't care for our own nation in crisis.

Today we will hear about the disastrous federal response to an approaching pandemic. Dr. Bright has filed one of the most specific and troubling whistleblower complaints I've ever seen. He was the right person with the right judgment at the right time. He was not only ignored, he was fired for being right. We can't have a system where the government fires those who get it right and reward those who get it completely wrong.

Mr. Michael Bowen, the Executive Vice President of Prestige Ameritech, will speak to America's crippling dependence on foreign countries for critical medical supplies - a public health issue and a national security issue.

Our country is paying a terrible price today, and it rests on Congress to address this threat where any effort of an adversary to cut off our supply of lifesaving drugs and supplies - our lifeline - would create a health care disaster on a scale never experienced before. I bear this responsibility as does every Member of Congress.

Finally, I regret that Secretary Azar, Dr. Robert Kadlec, and Dr. Peter Navarro have all refused to testify today.

I now ask for a moment of silence in honor of the over 80,000 Americans who have lost their lives from COVID-19.

