



May 2020

COVID-19 Oversight Plan

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & COMMERCE

The House Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations has led the Committee's oversight of the Trump Administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Subcommittee has participated in numerous bipartisan briefings with agency officials on a wide range of topics related to the federal government's response efforts, and has sent letters to the Administration requesting information about its actions to assist states and hospitals, and the health of the American public.

Moving forward, the Subcommittee will continue its COVID-19 oversight in the following areas:

Testing and Contact Tracing

Testing has been a major focus of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation's oversight during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because it is clear the country still lacks the necessary testing capacity to protect public health, it will continue to be an oversight priority. The Subcommittee will continue to push the Administration to release a detailed plan for ramping up testing capacity – for both diagnostic and antibody tests – as previously called for by the Committee. The Subcommittee will also continue to hold the Administration accountable for reaching the testing goals it has repeatedly promised but failed to meet.

State, local, territorial, and tribal health departments must also be supported to increase contact tracing capacity to effectively detect and contain the virus. The Subcommittee will examine the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) efforts to increase this capacity and monitor trends as communities reopen.

Related Letters

[Letter](#) to Deborah L. Birx, M.D., Coronavirus Task Force Coordinator, the White House (Apr. 20, 2020).

[Letter](#) to Alex M. Azar II, Secretary, HHS (Apr. 30, 2020).

Related Forums

[Briefing](#) with Andy Slavitt, former Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) from 2015–2017; Mark McClellan, M.D., Ph.D., former Administrator of CMS from 2004–2006 and former Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from 2002–2004; and Avik Roy, Co-founder and President of the Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity (May 8, 2020).

Supply Chain for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

As the Committee calls on the Administration to better coordinate federal efforts to acquire and distribute critical PPE supplies, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will continue to play a central role in holding officials accountable for responding to state and local needs. The Subcommittee will continue to explore HHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) efforts to procure and coordinate shipments of PPE to areas experiencing high or increased cases of COVID-19, how the Administration is working with commercial distributors, and the extent to which the federal government is relying on private supply chains versus playing a more proactive role in decisions related to distribution of supplies.

Related Letters

[Letter](#) to Alex M. Azar II, Secretary, HHS and Peter T. Gaynor, Administrator, FEMA (Apr. 20, 2020).

[Letter](#) to Mike Gula, Chief Executive Officer, Blue Flame Medical LLC (May 18, 2020).

COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Candidates

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations has a long history of conducting oversight of federal efforts to develop vaccines for seasonal influenza and emerging pandemics, conducting numerous hearings with Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and other experts over the last decade. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Subcommittee will continue that oversight by engaging with the Administration on its efforts to support development of a COVID-19 vaccine and plans for its use once approved. This will include examining public-private partnerships under the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), efforts at BARDA to assess and increase vaccine production capabilities, activities at FDA to support efficient and timely review of vaccines and vaccine candidates, and interagency coordination of a national COVID-19 vaccine plan.

Related Forums

[Briefing](#) with Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., Director, NIH (Apr. 30, 2020).

Food Safety and Supply

The Subcommittee Oversight and Investigation has a long history of conducting oversight of the safety of the nation's food supply, and will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on food safety activities, the supply chain, and the health of food production workers. The Subcommittee will work with CDC and FDA to evaluate the agencies' actions to protect the health and safety of food production workers, protect the country's food supply, and respond to supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Related Letters

[Letter](#) to Robert R. Redfield, M.D., Director, CDC (May 12, 2020).

Commitment to Science and Public Health

Recent concerning actions by the Trump Administration have called into question its commitment to science and the protection of public health. This includes the President's decision to suspend U.S. funding for the World Health Organization, personal attacks undermining the independence of inspectors general, reported pressures to prioritize federal funding for the politically-connected at the expense of evidence-based decision-making, and policies against the use of fetal tissue in federally funded research of potential COVID-19 treatments. The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will highlight these actions and hold Administration officials accountable for adhering to their responsibility to prioritize the public interest and empower all of the federal government's expertise and resources in the fight against COVID-19.

Related Letters

[Letter](#) to Alex M. Azar II, Secretary, HHS (Apr. 14, 2020).

[Letter](#) to Seema Verma, Administrator, CMS (Apr. 15, 2020).

[Letter](#) to Alex M. Azar II, Secretary, HHS (Apr. 16, 2020).

[Letter](#) to Russell T. Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget (Apr. 22, 2020).

[Letter](#) to Christi A. Grimm, Principal Deputy Inspector General, Office of Inspector General, HHS (Apr. 23, 2020).