

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2022 HHS Budget”

May 12, 2021

Welcome Secretary Becerra. You are so welcome here and we wish you every success. As you succeed in leading HHS, the American people will succeed. The Secretary and I are classmates, we came into Congress at the same time. And Mr. Secretary, you’ve inherited a position with enormous responsibilities, especially as our nation recovers from COVID-19.

You’re already making progress. HHS and the Biden Administration have administered over 200 million COVID-19 vaccine doses and are on track to vaccinate 70% of American adults by the Fourth of July. That would be a new kind of celebration of the birth of our country. New COVID-19 cases are at, thank God, a 7-month low. We’re seeing children safely going back to school, states reopening, and some normalcy returning.

The Biden Administration has moved quickly to reverse the damage done to our health care system by the previous Administration by:

- Enrolling over 1 million more Americans in ACA health coverage and reversing the draconian cuts to in-person enrollment help.
- Rescinding the approval of several states’ unlawful Medicaid work requirements.
- Ending the discriminatory public charge rule, which would have penalized people for legally using health care services such as Medicaid.
- Returning the U.S. to the World Health Organization.
- Protecting women’s health by proposing regulations to end the Title X gag rule, as well as ending the global gag rule.
- And ending discrimination in health care based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

These actions are in addition to quickly and responsibly distributing the billions of dollars in emergency public health funding provided through the American Rescue Plan.

President Biden’s fiscal year 2022 budget request continues these achievements by helping American families rebuild from the COVID-19 crisis healthier and safer than before.

The budget request addresses the systemic failures revealed by the pandemic by:

- Restoring and expanding public health capacity by providing the CDC with its largest budget increase in 20 years,

- Supplying \$1.6 billion for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant, more than doubling our nation's mental health funding,
- Investing \$10.7 billion to end the opioid crisis after last year's tragic record high number of overdose deaths,
- And addressing our nation's racial health disparities by increasing the Indian Health Service's budget by \$2.2 billion and making major investments at the CDC to reduce maternal mortality, especially for black women.

Importantly, the President's request also provides \$6.5 billion to launch the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H), which holds the promise for transformational, advanced biomedical research. I look forward to hearing more today about what the Administration envisions for this agency.

But there's still more to do. Our national security is at risk because of our dependence on foreign manufacturing for medical supplies and pharmaceuticals continues. We're unprepared for the avalanche of patients who will need care for chronic Long COVID. We still do not have an effective or easy-to-access treatment for COVID-19. And our nation continues to face stark and persistent racial disparities in health coverage, chronic disease, and mortality.

So, we have a lot more work to do. We look forward to working with you to develop a budget and policies to improve our nation's health and wellbeing. Thank you for your testimony.