

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
Hearing on “Influenza: Perspective on Current  
Season and Update on Preparedness”  
February 13, 2013**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

I would like to welcome you to your first hearing as Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

I had the opportunity to chair this subcommittee a number of years ago, so I know firsthand the important work that can be done from this post. Oversight has a number of important purposes, but one of the most significant is ensuring our federal programs are working properly and efficiently, especially in matters relating to the public's health and safety.

With regard to influenza, this committee examined the response to the H1N1 pandemic three years ago and probed influenza vaccine shortages in 2004. We have a tradition of doing strong oversight in this area. We are all aware that this has been a tough flu season and we have been especially troubled by this season's particularly harmful impact on the elderly and some children. We've also heard reports of spot shortages, especially in hard hit areas, and questions about the effectiveness of this year's vaccine. The good news is that while outbreaks appear to be on decline overall, parts of the country are experiencing increases, so it remains important to hear the most up-to-date facts and figures on the current season and examine what the government is doing to prepare for future seasons as well as pandemics.

Personally, some of what I have heard from my neighbors in Michigan about this year's flu is similar to what we have seen in the national press. Lakeland Healthcare, which provides care in my district, reported to my office that while they did not have a shortage of vaccine, they had to help supplement the supplies of other health care providers. I'm pleased whenever I hear that providers are communicating with each other to address these issues at the local level, but remain concerned about whether there will be enough supplies available in the next outbreak.

While we are still evaluating the response to this flu season, we need to be prepared for the possibility of a worse outbreak or even a pandemic in the future. I am excited to hear about recent innovations in vaccine technology and the role they will play in these efforts. I welcome Dr. Frieden of the CDC, Dr. Goodman of FDA, and Marcia Crosse of the GAO, and look forward to their testimony.

Thank you again to the witnesses for joining us today, and again congratulations and good luck to our new Oversight and Investigations Chairman.

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