

Opening Statement
Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2021 HHS Budget and Oversight of the Coronavirus Outbreak”
February 26, 2020

Confusion is the enemy of preparedness.

The Administration’s lack of coordination for the coronavirus response is on full display and the markets are reacting to the lack of trusted information, amongst many factors.

Our government must speak with credibility and authority.

That means answering key questions for the American public:

- What is the plan should this virus infect Americans in high numbers?
- What is the plan for increasing diagnostic capacity and what is the target number?
Dysfunctional tests have limited our ability to diagnosis the virus. The small number of U.S. cases may reflect limited testing, not the virus’s spread.
- What is the plan for protecting our health care workers?
- What is the plan to increase hospital capacity?

The virus triggers fear and I think the antidote for this is truth and transparency, including informing the American people of a coordinated, fully-funded government plan to keep us safe.

Instead of taking this situation seriously, the President has sent Congress a coronavirus funding request that is inadequate for this emergency.

And before requesting the emergency funding, the President’s budget contain dangerous cuts that weakens our public health frontline response, guts the health care safety net, and ends programs focused on increasing our health care workforce.

As the author of the *Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act*, I know that the best way to fight outbreaks is by preparing and investing in advance, not by rushing after a pandemic hits.

While the virus is spreading, the President’s budget cuts almost \$700 million from the CDC, \$430 million from the National Institute focused on infectious diseases, \$3 billion from the

government's global health program... and a jawdropping \$1.6 trillion from the federal programs that cover 1 in 3 Americans.

And the President's budget virtually ends the workforce development programs that train more than half a million clinicians each year.

The President's budget weakens our public health safety net, hurting our country's resiliency. If Americans are uninsured or underinsured, then they won't seek care and will contribute to the spread of the disease.

The President has often promised "beautiful" health care, but his HHS budget shows an ugly truth.

The people of our country need a swift advancement of a strong, strategic funding package that addresses the scale and seriousness of this public health crisis.