

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Anna Eshoo

Hearing on “Fiscal Year 2025 Department of Health and Human Services Budget”

April 17, 2024

Welcome back to the Subcommittee, Secretary Becerra. Today, we’re going to discuss, as the Chairman said, the President’s proposed fiscal year 2025 budget for the Department of Health and Human Services. The proposed budget builds on the administration’s many successes that have enhanced quality, affordable healthcare for the American people by doing the following: reducing barriers that prevent children enrolled in Medicaid and the CHIP program from maintaining health coverage; prioritizing scientific and medical innovation at our nation’s research institutions such as NIH; and sustaining funding for ARPA-H, which ARPA-H has this committee to thank for its creation, so they can continue tackling the deadliest diseases facing our nation. Today, Medicare is, for the first time in the history of our country, negotiating the cost of prescription drugs. Now there are many politicians talk about lowering drug prices. There is one person that got it done and that is President Biden. That’s a wonderful fact, standing very tall. Beneficiaries are already saving money through free vaccines and insulin capped at \$35 per month. Medicare beneficiaries’ prescription drug costs will be capped at \$2,000 starting next year. And the budget lowers costs for millions of Americans by expanding the \$2,000 cap on prescription drug costs beyond Medicare to individuals with private insurance coverage.

So, all seniors will be covered in the country and I think that this is a great accomplishment for the people of our country. The budget also proposes that Congress make permanent the premium tax credits that are drastically lowering health care costs for Americans. Increased premium tax credits fueled record-breaking enrollment in health coverage under the Affordable Care Act this year. Over 21 million people enrolled in marketplace coverage during the Open Enrollment Period, including 5 million new enrollees nationwide. Eighty percent of enrollees, this is really quite a statistic fact, 80% of enrollees found a plan for less than \$10 a month. So, Mr. Chairman, when you say, we want to lower costs, it is right there, and these are not junk plans. These are not junk plans. These are excellent plans and with the kind of coverage that people actually need to have.

Health care involves the whole body, yet our mental health system, as members of this committee knows all too well, remains inadequate. The President’s budget will turn the tide by investing, it is a whooping amount of money but it’s what’s needed in the country, \$20.8 billion in behavioral health initiatives across HHS. Women also deserve access to reproductive health care which is really under fire, to put it mildly, in the country. The budget provides \$390 million – a 36 percent increase from the previous year – for the only, the only federal grant program dedicated to providing access to comprehensive reproductive and preventive health services across our country. Importantly, the budget provides \$5.5 billion for the Office of Refugee

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Resettlement's Unaccompanied Children Program which is necessary to properly care for the children in ORR's custody and ensure their safety after they've been released.

I know my Republican colleagues have demonstrated significant interest in ORR, and I trust they will agree that we need to work to change somethings at ORR. I hope colleagues will join efforts to invest in the health of the American people and ensure the budget meets our nation's pressing needs that remain out there for all our constituents. I look forward to hearing more from the Secretary and I thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing and with my thanks, I yield back.