

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Examining Biosecurity at the Intersection of AI and Biology”

December 17, 2025

I cannot play along with whatever alternate reality exists in this hearing room for the Republicans. In this very room earlier this year, Democrats fought for over 24 hours to try to prevent Republican from taking health insurance away from millions of Americans and driving more hospitals to close across the country.

Across the street in the Capitol, Republicans are teeing up a vote on a so-called health care bill this afternoon that does nothing to make people healthier or make health insurance more affordable. In fact, their legislation does NOTHING to prevent health care costs from skyrocketing for 20 million Americans and about 4 million Americans losing their health care altogether.

And over at the Department of Health and Human Services a block away, Secretary Kennedy is making us less prepared for a pandemic by lying about life-saving vaccines. Americans will die as a result of Kennedy’s dangerous, repeated lies.

Today, this hearing is focused on biosecurity and pandemic threats and how AI might enable bad actors to develop bioweapons. I have very real concerns about these threats, but we cannot ignore the immediate threat that the Trump Administration and Secretary Kennedy have made us less safe and prepared across the board. And I simply have a hard time understanding why the Republican majority can hold an oversight hearing on hypothetical future threats from AI but cannot hold a hearing on current public health threats, such as the measles outbreak that is going on right now in at least 13 states.

Across HHS, experts and scientists are being replaced by ideologues and quacks. Secretary Kennedy and his acolytes are personally demanding public health agencies abandon longstanding, evidence-based recommendations on the safety of vaccines and demanding the HHS leadership to follow his anti-vaccine will.

We have an FDA now being led by unqualified anti-vaxxers who are doing everything they can to scare people about the proven safety of vaccines and scaring off any drug manufacturer that we might rely on to develop treatments and vaccines.

The CDC is increasingly led and advised by individuals lacking public health experience, who reject settled science and embrace an ideology of reducing vaccine access, including for newborn babies.

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DOGE and Donald Trump's Director of the National Institutes of Health froze or canceled thousands of grants, including funding for research on viruses, pandemic prevention, and vaccines. This research is essential to finding the cures and treatments of the future to fight life-threatening diseases and viruses.

And finally, while we're going to talk about the risks that AI might generate if used by a bad actor to create bioweapons, President Trump issued an Executive Order just last week that threatens to sue and withhold funds to states that have put in place crucial guardrails for AI. The President's action is not only illegal, but it will increase the risks from AI, including biosecurity risks, at a time when the use of AI is rapidly expanding.

I would love to get back to a place where we can have hearings on new threats with a recognition that we can work together on solutions that make Americans healthier and safer. But unless Committee Republicans join us in demanding even the most basic accountability from this administration, nothing will stop this President and Secretary Kennedy from doing whatever they want regardless of what laws we pass. Until the Republicans step up and join us in holding the Trump Administration accountable and protecting our constituents, nothing we do here is going to matter.

In our discussion about emerging biosecurity threats and how to mitigate risks, we cannot ignore the state of America's pandemic preparedness. It is central to preventing and responding to risks posed by biological threats of all kinds, whether from nature or made with the assistance of AI.

But under the Trump Administration, our pandemic preparedness and public health systems have been decimated, and it is time for real oversight and accountability in this Committee.