



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

House Committee on Education and Labor Full Committee Hearing
Examining the Policies and Priorities of the U.S. Department of Labor
Wednesday, June 16, 2021 | 9:00 a.m.

Today, we are meeting to discuss the Department of Health and Human Services budget request for Fiscal Year 2022 and examine the Department's policies and priorities.

Secretary Becerra, thank you for coming today and thank you for your time. I fondly remember our time when we both served on this Committee, as well as the Judiciary Committee, and I am pleased to welcome you back. We look forward to discussing your vision for ensuring all American access to high-quality health care.

The importance of maintaining a strong public health system has never been more apparent. Regretfully, we are mourning the grim milestone of 600,000 COVID-19 deaths in the United States. Many of these deaths could have been prevented by a coherent response to the pandemic.

For example, last night I attended an event at the Philippine Embassy, and I was informed that they had suffered 20,000 deaths. The United States is three times bigger than the Philippines, so at their rate, we would have suffered 60,000 deaths—not 600,000 deaths.

Fortunately, the Biden-Harris Administration is taking an evidence-based approach to reinvesting in the wellbeing of our families and communities.

Most notably, the Administration has worked with Congress to enact the American Rescue Plan, which:

- Helped more than half of our nation's adults get fully vaccinated,
- Protected children from abuse and neglect and expanded access to child nutrition,
- Put us on track to cutting the child poverty about in half,
- Addressed rising rates of domestic and gender-based violence,
- Strengthened support for older Americans, and
- Expanded access to affordable health care.

These investments have saved lives and reaffirmed that, when we invest in the health of our communities, we provide people with the tools to care for themselves and their loved ones.

However, severe challenges are still ahead. Secretary Becerra, you inherited a Department that consistently sabotaged the *Affordable Care Act* and jeopardized access to health care for millions of Americans.

Today, we look forward to hearing how the Department's budget request, the American Jobs Plan, and the American Families Plan would finally help defeat the pandemic and expand access to high-quality health care for people across the country.

Again, thank you, for being with us today. I will now recognize the Ranking Member of the Committee, the gentlelady from North Carolina, Dr. Foxx.