

**Congressman Michael C. Burgess, M.D.**  
**Energy and Commerce Full Committee Hearing**  
**“Oversight of the Trump Administration’s Response to the COVID-19  
Pandemic”**  
**Tuesday, June 23, 2020**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad we are holding this hearing today, as it provides members of the Energy and Commerce Committee – the committee with the broadest jurisdiction over health care in Congress – the opportunity to hear from many of the experts who have been coordinating the American response to COVID-19 even before it reached our shores. I appreciate each of the panelists being here to provide us with a comprehensive update and to answer our questions. We know how hard you have been working to protect the health of our nation, so we appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedules to testify.

As a doctor and as a Congressman who has served through bird flu, SARS, swine flu, Ebola, and Zika outbreaks, I became incredibly concerned upon the emergence of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China. It was like nothing I had ever read about before, especially given the initial signs of how transmissible the virus is. With limited information coming out of China and the complex nature of the virus, the globe had to respond in real time. We continue to learn new information every day, and thanks to the public health leaders sitting in front of us today, the Department of Health and Human Services provided flexibility to allow our health care system to adapt and respond quickly.

Having served in Congress for numerous outbreaks, I have seen how bureaucracy can hinder a response. While it may have been a bumpy start, I am impressed with how the agencies within HHS have worked together to lift burdensome regulations and allow for a nimble response, especially in the realm of testing.

Our nation's response to this crisis is far from over. We must remain vigilant and prepare for a possible second wave while living in this "new normal." A key part of reopening the economy is rapid and widely available testing, which is critical. The Community-Based Testing Sites have been instrumental in getting tests out into the community, and I hope that we can continue to build on those successes and enable states to expand upon those efforts. As people seek to return to work and to school, many employers and educational institutions are looking to testing to ensure a level of safety for their employees and students. This is a topic worthy of discussion. Social distancing will remain and necessary part of our response, but asymptomatic spread makes this virus an invisible enemy difficult to combat.

Earlier this month, Republicans on the Energy and Commerce Committee put out a report on efforts that should be made on testing and surveillance before the fall, which highlights the successes of the COVID-19 response and provides recommendations for future administrative action.

This report is critical because this pandemic is very much still alive in our communities and we must continue to prepare for the future. Efforts to develop vaccines and therapeutics must remain at the forefront, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what the plans are once we have an approved vaccine. Additionally, we have seen other health care issues arise, such as reduced childhood and other routine vaccinations. The last thing we need on top of a COVID-19 pandemic would be an outbreak of the measles or another preventable disease.

Today is an opportunity for us to ask a wide variety of questions about different topics, but I still believe it is important we have an agenda in evaluating our response and what we can do moving forward. Last month, I sent a series of letters to Health Subcommittee Chair Anna Eshoo outlining COVID-19 hearings that we should hold. I appreciate that we were able to hold a productive hearing on racial disparities last week, and I look forward to holding future hearings on mental health, testing, provider relief, and the strategic national stockpile.

This Committee should be in the business of enhancing our nation's pandemic response, as this was the Committee where the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act was created. We have a duty to work with the Department of Health and Human Services to provide a reliable but flexible pandemic response framework and to revisit policies when they need improvement.

I thank our witnesses for being here and for their commitment to protecting the public health of the United States. I yield back.