

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Cathy McMorris
Rodgers
Subcommittee on Health
“Road to Recovery: Ramping Up COVID-19 Vaccines,
Testing, and Medical Supply Chain.”
February 3, 2021**

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chair Eshoo and Republican Leader Guthrie for holding this important hearing.

Exactly one year ago today, news outlets were reporting that the global death toll from the coronavirus was 362, with all but one of those deaths occurring in mainland China.

A year later, and this heartbreaking number has surpassed 2 million, with over 425,000 of these tragic deaths occurring in the United States.

This pandemic has wreaked havoc on our way of life. The loss of life has been devastating...

... Our previously booming economy has been decimated...

... Our mental health crisis has only worsened...

... And the long-term impact on our children being kept out of the classroom is incalculable.

Last Congress, we put our political differences aside to make extraordinary investments in the fight against COVID-19 through five separate bipartisan relief packages.

These included providing over 30 billion dollars for states, territories, and tribes for testing, vaccine distribution, contact tracing, and public health data infrastructure improvement.

... and over 23 billion dollars to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority for the research, development, and manufacture of novel vaccines, tests, and treatments.

...and \$178 billion dollars for health care providers on the front lines of taking care of patients with COVID-19.

This investment and partnership with the private sector has led to the unprecedented development of innovative vaccines and

treatments coming to market faster than we ever thought possible.

Operation Warp Speed is one of the most ambitious and successful undertakings in American history, and with two lifesaving vaccines now authorized by the FDA, and a third hopefully soon to follow, there is light at the end of this dark tunnel.

However, our hard work is not yet complete.

Vaccine distribution is ramping up, but we must ensure states have the resources and flexibility they need to immunize successfully as many people who want it...

... and meet the unique health needs of their individual populations.

We heard yesterday in the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee from West Virginia, which has relied on community pharmacies to get the vaccines to people.

Unfortunately, Washington State has not been as successful. Gov. Inslee and others in Olympia spend a great deal of time pointing fingers at Washington, DC for the state's slow distribution instead figuring out strategies to get people vaccinated as West Virginia is doing.

Clearly some states were better prepared and used the advice of the CDC career scientists to implement locally targeted strategies more successfully than he has done.

SUPPLY CHAIN

While vaccine distribution is critical to safely and responsibly reopen our economy and our schools, we also learned additional challenges during the response to COVID-19.

We learned that our medical supply chain is incredibly vulnerable and that we rely too heavily on adversarial countries such as China for critically important products, such as personal protective equipment.

We need to consider policies that will improve our domestic manufacturing without impacting cost and consumer access.

Our strategic national stockpile and medical supply distribution logistics also need to be strengthened.

While we have met this unprecedented crisis with an equally unprecedented response, our resources are not unlimited. Congress has a responsibility to oversee the money we have spent, understand how it is being distributed and used...

... and learn what's working and what hasn't..

As Chairman Pallone said during our organizing meeting last week, this Committee has a rich history of bipartisan cooperation and hard work...

... perhaps more so than any other Committee in Congress.

Between the pandemic, the economic crisis, and the social and political unrest, last year was one of the most difficult in our Nation's history.

Yet, despite these incredible hurdles, Congress was able to come together on five separate occasions to give the American people the relief they needed.

This pandemic, and our government's response, is bigger than any single administration or political party.

As we discuss these important issues and our path forward with our distinguished witnesses today, I hope our focus will be not about pointing fingers for our shortcomings...

... but an opportunity to learn what bipartisan steps we can take over the next several months to win the fight against COVID-19, restore our way of life, rebuild the greatest economy in history...

... and prepare for future pandemics so that a public health emergency of this magnitude never happens again.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today and I yield back the balance of my time.