

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Morgan Griffith
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Virtual Hearing
“Leading the Way Forward: Biden Administration Actions to Increase
COVID-19 Vaccinations”
March 17, 2021
As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chair DeGette, for holding this important hearing on COVID-19 vaccines.

Just over a year ago the World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 could be characterized as a pandemic. A few days later President Trump declared a national emergency in the U.S. About a week after that, California became the first state to go on lockdown. More states followed soon after that, forcing businesses, schools, and restaurants to close.

As of March 11, we have lost 527,726 Americans to COVID-19, and according to a recent *NY Times* article, one in three Americans have lost a loved one to the virus.¹ Tens of millions more have been infected, some of whom are experiencing prolonged symptoms.

However, we have reasons to be hopeful. There is light at the end of what has been a very dark tunnel. Because of the success of Operation Warp Speed and the unprecedented efforts of the private sector—to date, we have three safe and effective vaccines that have received Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) from

¹ https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_totaldeaths; and <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/03/05/us/covid-deaths.html>.

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson – and more vaccines candidates are in clinical trials. Two of our witnesses, Dr. Fauci and Dr. Marks, played important roles in this achievement. While the vaccine rollout was slow to start as vaccine manufacturers ramped up their production efforts, the supply and distribution has continued to improve since the first vaccines were authorized, distributed, and administered in December.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 19 percent of the U.S. population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and over ten percent of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated.² This means that more people have been vaccinated than have been infected with the virus in the U.S. We still have a ways to go, but we are in a remarkable situation given we are only a little over year out from the start of this global pandemic.

Recently this Subcommittee held two hearings focused on COVID-19 vaccines. On February 2nd, the Subcommittee heard from a handful of states about vaccine distribution and administration efforts at the state level. The overwhelming message was that supply was their biggest issue.

On February 23rd, the Subcommittee heard from five COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers on the status and supply of their vaccines. Pfizer and Moderna both testified that they anticipated delivering 300 million doses each of their COVID-19

² <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations>.

vaccines by the end of July. In addition, Johnson & Johnson testified it could deliver 100 million doses by the end of June. Further, other companies, including AstraZeneca and Novavax, have been manufacturing vaccine doses at risk so that doses will be available to ship should their vaccines receive authorization from the FDA.

I look forward to hearing from the top federal officials before us about President Biden's recent promise that every American adult will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine by May 1, and how soon after that every adult will be able to make an appointment and actually get vaccinated.

I also hope to get an update regarding recent guidance that has been issued by the administration, including guidance related to schools; guidance for those who have already been vaccinated; and the recently revised guidance for nursing homes.

Further, I look forward to hearing about research efforts over the past year since what we now know about the virus is very different than what we knew one year ago. Specifically, I hope to hear about the status of the variants, including how effective our existing countermeasures are against new variants; and what we know about those who continue to experience symptoms long after contracting the virus, also known as long-haulers.

Lastly, I hope to get an update from the FDA regarding the timing of additional vaccines being authorized; and what the process will look like when the public health emergency is over and we have to transition products that have received EUAs to full approvals.

I look forward to our discussion today to learn more about the federal government's ongoing response efforts and how we can end this pandemic as quickly possible.

Thank you, Madam Chair, I yield back.