

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

***Hearing on “Leading the Way Forward: Biden Administration Actions to Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations”***

**March 17, 2021**

We are here today to continue our critical oversight of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in the United States—an effort that holds great promise to help us beat this pandemic.

We are all too aware of the devastation that COVID-19 has inflicted on this country and around the world. More than a thousand Americans continue to die from COVID-19 every day, while new, more contagious strains spread across the nation.

Yet, there are reasons to hope that brighter days are ahead. We know that vaccines are among the most powerful tools to combat this virus.

Currently, there are three extraordinarily safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines authorized by the Food and Drug Administration.

Democrats have been working to help expand the availability and administration of these vaccines across the country. Last week, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan into law—historic legislation that invests in the tools and resources needed to crush the virus and provide relief to struggling families.

Critically, it provides more than \$20 billion to speed up COVID-19 vaccination efforts across the country, supports the development of community vaccination centers, and provides funding for mobile vaccination units in underserved areas.

This new law will allow us to get shots in more people’s arms quickly and equitably, so that we can end this pandemic as soon as possible.

While the initial vaccine rollout under the Trump Administration was bogged down because of poor planning, limited state resources and vaccine supply, and confusion, the Biden Administration has taken decisive action to get the COVID-19 vaccination effort back on track.

Since President Biden has taken office, the weekly vaccine supply sent to states has more than doubled and states have been given more advanced notice of their vaccine allocation. We are now on track to have enough vaccine supply for all American adults by the end of May—two months earlier than prior projections.

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The Biden Administration also continues to prioritize efforts to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for marginalized communities and Americans who are more vulnerable to severe disease.

President Biden is also focused on the well-being of children and families, recognizing the need for students to return to in-person school as soon and as safely as possible. President Biden has encouraged states to expand their vaccination eligibility to teachers and school staff. He also expanded the retail pharmacy program to help vaccinate educators by providing additional doses and helping educators schedule appointments. The American Rescue Plan also provides nearly \$130 billion to help schools reopen safely and support students and staff returning to the classroom.

Thanks to the Biden Administration's efforts, we're already seeing encouraging results. More than 70 million Americans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

The work is far from over, but we are entering a new phase in the nation's vaccination efforts.

Last week, President Biden set an aggressive goal, directing states to make all American adults eligible for their vaccination by May 1st. I applaud the President's ambitious proposal and look forward to working with the Administration to achieve this bold benchmark.

Despite these tremendous efforts and the progress that has been made, we must not be complacent. As the President told the American people last week, the federal government alone cannot defeat this pandemic—it will take all of us doing our part to beat this virus and return to our former lives.

The stakes could not be higher. The longer it takes to vaccinate America, the more we risk further spread of the disease and increase the likelihood that new variants will continue to spread.

I am pleased that we are joined today by a distinguished panel of scientists and public health leaders from the Biden Administration. I look forward to hearing how we can continue to make progress and respond to the challenges that remain in the battle against the pandemic.

We must work together for this historic vaccination campaign to succeed. If we do, I am confident that we will defeat COVID-19.