

**Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Joint Oversight & Investigations and Health Subcommittee Hearing**  
**February 8, 2023**  
**Opening Statement**  
**As Prepared for Delivery**

**INTRO**

Thank you, Chair Griffith.

The questions we're asking today are the questions we hear from people in our communities everyday... As the people's elected representatives, we have a responsibility to conduct oversight...

President Biden's public health leaders are here today because they have broken the American people's trust.

**NIH**

I'll start with you, Dr. Tabak.

I was once a huge supporter of NIH.

The overall lack of responsiveness, the suppression of dissenting voices in the Covid origins investigation, and the frequent mixed messaging on health precautions – the NIH is falling far short of its goals of integrity and accountability.

For the past 2 years, we've pressed for answers about what kind of research you're funding with taxpayer dollars and what sort of oversight you're doing to ensure funds are not being misspent.

Your cooperation has been abysmal.

**CDC**

Next, Director Walensky and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

Your guidance was used by the federal government to justify mandates that have more parents questioning routine vaccination.

Your guidance influenced by the teachers unions kept schools closed.

Your guidance using unreliable studies was used to justify mask mandates on kids.

We know these weren't decisions based on the best science and data from across the world.

Now, our children are paying the price.

Academically, they've been set back for years.

Emotionally, they are living through the most severe youth mental health crisis we've ever seen.

And physically, cases of type 2 diabetes and obesity in children has surged.

Director Walensky, the CDC does not need more authority... it needs robust oversight.

It has always operated without a Congressional authorization and that is going to change.

## **FDA**

Dr. Califf, [pause]

The FDA has failed to alleviate concerns about the vaccine.

I'll note that **before** imposing authoritarian vaccine mandates as president, candidate Biden made statements about the vaccine that did lasting damage.

But, top vaccine review officials, Marion Gruber and Phil Krause, left FDA as the Biden administration was working to authorize boosters – doses which many people may not have needed.

Beyond the vaccine, FDA inspections of foreign sites are woefully lacking. Innovators can't get the guidance they need to meet approval standards, and patients are the ones left without the innovation or supply of products they need.

## **ASPR**

Finally, regarding Assistant Secretary Dawn O'Connell's absence.

I understand why she couldn't be here today... and I extend my deepest sympathies to her and her family for their loss.

However, the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response is the top office for public health emergencies.

ASPR's job is to be prepared.

So, it is **unacceptable** that another leader from the administration wasn't **prepared** to be here today in the Assistant Secretary's place.

There are no excuses, especially given the enormous amounts of resources and responsibilities we have allocated to ASPR over the years.

## **CONCLUSION**

My message today to all of the administration's public health officials...

... is this is going to be a long road.

Trust is broken a lot faster than it can be rebuilt.

Many will say that the American people deserve an apology...

... but they deserve much more.

I think about every single person who lost a loved one to COVID-19.

The people who died alone because of COVID-19 policies.

The frontline workers who sacrificed but were still forced out of their jobs because of vaccine mandates.

And the children isolated and set back from school closures.

Surely, we can all agree that FOR THEM we can't repeat the mistakes of this pandemic response.

They deserve full accountability and transparency. Nothing less.

That is the bare minimum of what we expect today, so we can begin to heal, restore trust, and better prepare for the future.

Thank you.