

CMR OPENING REMARKS CDC HEARING

Thank you, Chair Griffith. I also want to welcome and congratulate, Dr. Cohen, on her appointment as Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We must have a transparent and honest conversation about the future of the CDC—an agency that has never been, but needs to be, authorized by Congress.

Director Cohen, you might be the last appointed CDC Director without a Senate confirmation. Your actions and decisions can help return the CDC back to its fundamental mission or your actions could allow the CDC to drift further away and worsen public trust.

NEED TO EXAMINE PAST DECISIONS TO INFORM THE FUTURE

We want to hear from you today about the CDC's preparedness for the current wave of seasonal viruses, such as the flu, RSV, and COVID-19. At the same time, we want to examine the CDC's past decisions and guidance to understand how you're taking lessons learned from COVID-19, mpox, and other recent public health threats to improve our current and future public health strategies.

This is a chance to restore transparency and public trust in our health institutions and ensure that the CDC's issued guidance is clear, practical, and consistently relevant and up to date with the latest science. Sometimes, this may include telling the American people what the CDC does and doesn't know.

To put this bluntly, your predecessors took bad advice... they acted on bad advice due to political pressure... and misled the American people. The institution you now run influenced schools

to remain closed by listening to non-scientific stakeholders, namely Teachers' Unions. And because of the guidance to keep schools closed for an extended period, our children—the very future of our country—now suffer generational learning loss and devastating mental health conditions.

The gravity of the situation is clear. If we fail to restore trust in public health institutions and correct past missteps, the consequences for our children and country could be dire.

LONG LASTING EFFECTS OF BAD CDC POLICY

It is in this context of urgency that we must consider the substantial investments made during the pandemic. Congress provided schools with 190 billion dollars to combat COVID, allocating an estimated 20 percent to mitigate learning loss.¹

And despite these efforts, students in grades three through eight are lagging behind months—if not years—in Reading and

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/08/magazine/covid-aid-schools.html>

Math abilities.² Nationwide, our children's academic performance has suffered an historic decline, with reading and math scores plummeting to the lowest levels in 30 years.³ Further, school attendance is down, and students are dealing with a crisis of loneliness. These facts are not merely statistics; they are our children... our nieces and nephews... our neighbors' children... They are the next generation. And right now, this is a stark indication of the broader fall out from actions taken during the COVID-19 response that we are only beginning to uncover.

As we reflect on the events that led us to this point, we must acknowledge the weight of responsibility that comes with being the Director of the CDC. The agency's guidance has far-reaching implications, affecting not just public health, but our day-to-day lives and the overall well-being of our children.

PRIORITIZING TRANSPARENCY

² <https://edopportunity.org/recovery/#/map/none/districts/mth1922/fri/all/8.39/47.82/-117.59/5308250,47.668,-117.399>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/us/national-test-scores-math-reading-pandemic.html>

It is imperative that we see a commitment to cooperating with Congress. Too many of our inquiries to your predecessor went inadequately answered or wholly ignored. I think we all agree that being transparent with us—and the Americans we represent—is foundational to restoring trust.

I know this is your first time testifying before Congress as Director of the CDC, but this hearing is more than a procedural formality; it is a pivotal moment for accountability and reassessment.

The insights shared today will not only shed light on past decisions but also take a step toward rebuilding trust. This hearing is an opportunity to share how you will apply lessons learned to the current respiratory illness season as well as future decisions by the CDC.

Director Cohen, you have an opportunity today to inform the committee—and the American people—how **you** plan to lead as Director.

We look forward to your testimony and hearing about how you will lead the CDC moving forward and restore public trust.

Thank you, for being here today, Director Cohen.

Chair Griffith, I yield back.