

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Health
“The Fiscal Year 2020 HHS Budget”
March 12, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chairwoman Eshoo, and welcome to Secretary Azar. It is a pleasure to have you testifying before the Health Subcommittee this afternoon about the fiscal year 2020 budget proposal. The President’s budget provides Congress with an important blueprint for our appropriations process and with policies that the President and his Administration would like to see in the coming fiscal year.

Under our Constitution, no money may be spent from the Treasury unless appropriated by Congress and, in a perfect world, no money would be appropriated unless the expenditure is previously authorized. The Energy and Commerce Committee is a principal authorizing committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. I believe this is a critical task and that it is important to get input from the

Department of Health and Human Services when we are reauthorizing and reforming programs under its control. While we do hear from the boots on the ground in our districts, it the agency that both oversees the implementation of these programs and provides funding to ensure that organizations can carry out the initiatives' goals.

Secretary Azar, thus far in your tenure as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, you have proven to be immensely helpful to this Committee and its work. You and your team have been responsive to our requests for information and input, and you have made yourself available to Members so that we can hear about your priorities and your intention to work with Congress on various initiatives. Of all the Secretaries of Health and Human Services over my years in Congress, I have found you to be the most transparent and accessible, and I look forward to continuing to partner with you on your efforts to improve access and quality of health care for Americans.

One issue that I have raised in each hearing this Congress and one that I hear consistently from constituents is the cost and complexity of the health care system. North Texans frequently tell me that they can barely afford their insurance premiums, let alone the cost they must pay to seek the care they need, especially of those with high deductible plans. Secretary Azar, I know that addressing the cost of health care, and specifically drug prices, has been a priority for the Department under your leadership. I hope that this Committee, being the one with primary jurisdiction over these issues, will work with you as we consider ways to solve these issues.

Additionally, as the Energy and Commerce Committee primarily drafted landmark laws, including 21st Century Cures and last year's opioid effort - the SUPPORT for and Communities Act, we should conduct responsible oversight to ensure that the Department of Health and Human Services is implementing these laws in alignment with Congressional intent. It is encouraging to see that the President's

budget request seeks to expand treatment and recovery support services for individuals suffering from substance use disorders, in addition to enhancing prevention of addiction in the first place.

While it is important to stem the tide of addiction, we cannot ignore those who have a legitimate need for pain treatment, including cancer patients, sickle cell anemia patients, and others. To that effect, the budget requests \$500 million to use for the National Institutes of Health to partner with private industry to work towards the development of non-addictive pain therapies, in addition to addiction treatments and overdose-reversal technologies. Additionally, I am encouraged to see that the budget proposes \$500 million for childhood cancer therapies, and \$291 million to defeat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Both efforts are worthy of Congressional support.

Another important agency within HHS, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, is required to provide care for unaccompanied alien

children, a task for which it was woefully unprepared when this crisis began in 2012 when President Obama signed an executive order enacting the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. While conditions and quality of care have improved, the number of illegal border crossings continues to increase. Let me be clear, the Office of Refugee Resettlement does not enforce immigration law; they receive children as a result of ICE and CBP enforcement.

President Trump's budget includes up to \$3.7 billion in FY2020 for the Unaccompanied Alien Children program. Congress charged the Office of Refugee Resettlement with the care of unaccompanied alien children, and I hope this committee will support these dedicated HHS and ORR employees as they continue to work with integrity in the face of baseless allegations.

Again, thank you to Secretary Azar for your willingness to testify and for taking the time out of your busy schedule to answer our questions.