

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo**

Hearing on “Road to Recovery: Ramping Up COVID-19 Vaccines, Testing, and Medical Supply Chain”

February 3, 2021

Welcome to the first Health Subcommittee hearing of the 117th Congress and a very warm welcome to the new Ranking Member Brett Guthrie and the new Members of the Health Subcommittee.

Over the past year our country has undergone profound changes due to COVID-19.

The veil has been torn off every system and laid bare the many “pre-existing conditions” in our country... including inequities of care in communities of color and the inability of many to access or afford needed health care.

This Subcommittee must move quickly and purposefully to correct these wrongs and do what’s right.

We’re in a race against death. We’ve lost nearly 450,000 of our fellow Americans to COVID-19.

As deaths continue to climb, Native, Black, and Latino Americans face the highest risk. According to the CDC, these communities are nearly 3 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than white Americans.

The previous Administration lacked a national strategy to end the pandemic and administer vaccines to Americans efficiently, equitably, and effectively.

Without effective federal coordination for the vaccination campaign, we’ve seen seniors spending hours in line for vaccinations or wealthier, whiter communities accessing vaccines ahead of communities of color.

We’re tripping at the starting block.

With a new Administration and a new Congress, we can optimize this new beginning. The President has put forward his American Rescue Plan which recognizes that we’re in a battle to save American lives.

It responds to this crisis with an all-of-government and all-of-America wartime plan:

First, the American Rescue Plan provides \$20 billion for a national vaccination strategy to increase supply and vaccination sites to fully vaccinate 300 million Americans by the end of this summer. The plan creates a public health corps of 100,000 newly hired public health workers to conduct individual outreach in their local communities to address vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.

Second, it invests \$50 billion to scale up testing by buying rapid tests, expanding lab capacity, and coordinating the genetic sequencing needed to detect the concerning new variants of the virus.

Third, it invests \$3 billion in innovative COVID-19 treatments. While we have effective vaccines to prevent people from getting COVID-19, we do not yet have accessible medicines to treat patients who are sick with COVID-19. This plan funds the research and large-scale clinical trials needed to develop therapeutics such as antivirals and antibodies to help people recover from COVID-19.

Fourth, it buys a strong supply of American-made Personal Protective Equipment. The plan invests \$10 billion to ensure we have sufficient protective gear by expanding domestic manufacturing.

Together the public health efforts in the American Rescue Plan will cost \$160 billion.

The health benefits of the American Rescue Plan are abundantly clear, but these measures will also aid our economic recovery.

Last month, President Trump's White House Council of Economic Advisors estimated that every day the nation speeds up vaccinations saves \$10 billion in health and economic costs.

Moody's Analytics found that the American Rescue Plan would create 7.5 million jobs and add 8 points to the GDP in 2021.

We have the moral and economic duty to invest in the American Rescue Plan.

I hope this Subcommittee is prepared to hit the ground running to move these emergency actions through our deliberative process.

I thank the distinguished panel of witnesses who are with us today, including a former governor, the former top scientist of the FDA, the former director of the Strategic National Stockpile, and the former public health director of the 3rd largest American city.

Each of you will enlighten and guide this Subcommittee on the urgent task before us.