

**OPENING STATEMENT FOR THE HONORABLE BRETT GUTHRIE
REPUBLICAN LEADER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
April 28, 2021**

The hearing on, “The Long Haul: Forging a Path through the Lingering Effects of COVID-19.”

As Prepared for Delivery

Chair Eshoo, thank you for holding this important hearing today.

Unfortunately, over 31 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19, and some of these Americans experience symptoms weeks and months after being infected with COVID-19. Today we will examine the long-term effects of this life-threatening virus. These long-term effects are often referred to as post-acute COVID-19, or Long COVID. We still have many questions about how individuals recover from this terrible virus.

Last May, I joined, Chair Eshoo, Rep. Burgess, Rep. DeGette, and Rep. Trone in introducing the Ensuring Understanding of COVID-19 to Protect Public Health Act. This bill requires the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to conduct a longitudinal study on the health impacts of COVID-19. At the time, we were just starting to learn about COVID “long haulers” and some of the side effects this virus has on a percentage of Americans post COVID-19 infection.

In December, Congress came together to include \$1.15 billion in the December funding package for just this reason - to learn more about this issue.

While we know more today than last year, we still have many unanswered questions. In America, we are fortunate to have access to the best medical experts in the world who are diligently working to quickly find answers to these questions.

I want to thank Dr. Collins and Dr. Brooks for being here today to explain what is currently understood about this condition and provide an update on what NIH and CDC are doing to further study Long COVID. I also want to thank the witnesses on the second panel. I look forward to learning more about how COVID-19 is still impacting you.

I was pleased to learn that in December the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), in collaboration with other institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health, hosted a Workshop on Post-acute Sequelae of COVID-19 to examine the “knowledge gaps” that we currently have regarding the long-term effects that some individuals are experiencing.

Additionally, I appreciate CDC’s efforts to educate the public on the symptoms that may present themselves as Long COVID. I want to help get people back to work. However, people have reported that Long COVID symptoms are preventing them from returning to their jobs. We must help patients receive proper treatments and learn ways to resolve these symptoms. I often hear of Long

COVID cases and each one seems to be different with varying symptoms and severity. Studying these patients will be valuable and instrumental in many Americans day-to-day life post COVID.

Lastly, I want to take this time, to encourage all Americans to get vaccinated. There is no better protection from this terrible virus than one of the FDA approved vaccines that are currently available. Long COVID can be avoided with vaccination. Operation Warp Speed and American innovation has led to three and safe effective vaccines being approved. Now is not the time to put your guard down but rather get vaccinated to protect yourself and those around you.

Thank you Chair, I yield back.