

Opening Statement of The Honorable Brett Guthrie
“ARPA-H: The Next Frontier of Biomedical Research”

February 8, 2021

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chair Eshoo for holding this hearing.

I first want to express how disappointed I was to hear about how the now former Director Lander – who until yesterday served in a cabinet level position for President Biden – disrespected and demeaned his staff at the White House. I am glad to hear that President Biden accepted his resignation, which is why he is unfortunately not with us today.

Today, we are discussing the proposal of creating the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). This would establish a new DARPA-like agency housed within the National Institutes of Health.

Others and I on this committee have been strong supporters of health care innovation, specifically biopharmaceutical and biomedical research. A great success story is Operation Warp Speed, which was established by President Trump at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fact, there are many issues in health care we can and need to address on a bipartisan basis. However, President Biden is making it increasingly more difficult to support proposals like ARPA-H when he consistently promotes partisan legislation, like the Build Back Better Act, that would crush our biopharmaceutical innovation as we know it today.

Further, before moving forward with creating a new agency under NIH, I believe there are some significant scientific research integrity issues that have gone unchecked at NIH that need to be addressed before we allocate more federal resources toward publicly funded biomedical research.

Last Congress as Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, I co-led a letter to Director Collins of NIH and Director Wray of the FBI to request information on how their agencies are working to remove foreign influence from biomedical research. NIH is the largest funder of

biomedical research in the world and Director Wray described how researchers from China can mask their identity to accept millions of U.S. grant dollars to steal U.S.-backed biomedical research to give China a competitive edge.

I also know some of my Republican colleagues on this committee have been actively leading on this issue and call on our Democratic colleagues to join us in this fight to protect this critical research.

To be clear, I believe these hearings are important to understanding the gaps in care across our health care system and how an agency like ARPA-H could close these gaps. I do have questions about if this agency would undermine research efforts being led by similar federal agencies in addition to our private sector partners.

ARPA-H is anticipated to be housed within the NIH whose mission is to conduct fundamental basic research to ensure we have a foundational understanding of how biological systems work. The private sector, not the NIH, is responsible for bringing breakthrough therapies to market, as only 5% of NIH funded research initiatives result in treatments that come to the market and only yield six new patents for every \$100 million spent on research.

The Congressional Budget Office data further shows that the pharmaceutical industry invested \$83 billion in research and development in fiscal year 2019 alone with over 60% more drugs first coming to market in the U.S. between 2010 and 2019, which underscores how effective private markets are in quickly adapting to patient needs. We ought to be finding more opportunities to allow this critical innovation to thrive.

Further, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and DARPA are all federal entities working directly with or partnering with industry leaders developing cutting-edge technologies and patient therapies. I wonder how ARPA-H could impact our ongoing efforts within the private sector, and these agencies, and especially since there are still some unanswered questions about how the agency will function.

I look forward to working with members of this committee to getting some answers to my questions about ARPA-H and working to promote policies that will allow for more biomedical research to successfully reach patients. Doing so will be imperative to save more lives.

