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**Opening Statement**  
**Health Subcommittee Hearing, “ Fiscal Year 2024 Department**  
**of Health and Human Services Budget”**  
*As Prepared for Delivery*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today’s hearing on the President’s Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services comes at a time when we need to return hope and optimism to America again so people can live fuller, happier, and healthier lives.

We need to come together to stop the fentanyl crisis and save lives.

We need to rein in out-of-control government spending to reverse the President Biden’s inflation crisis so people can afford health care.

We need to help build and support strong communities, so people are less lonely... less anxious... and restore a sense of purpose and belonging for our children.

There must be accountability from the administration, too, for all the ways it has made these crises worse, especially with authoritarian COVID-19 policies.

Secretary Becerra, the President’s budget should reflect the solutions we need to make people’s lives better.

Unfortunately, that is not what we are seeing.

## **FENTANYL**

Regarding fentanyl....

As Mr. Guthrie said, your budget only mentions this one time.

It is unacceptable given more people than ever are dying from fentanyl poisoning in America.

This Committee has heard from several parents, such as Molly Cain, who emphasize that their children were not suffering from substance use disorder, but that their teenager purchased a pill off snapchat, or bought cocaine, not knowing it was laced with fentanyl, and died.

Your budget request for increased funding for medication assisted treatment, while important, doesn't seem like it would have prevented these individuals from dying of fentanyl poisoning.

This is perhaps the greatest threat facing our communities... but your budget does not reflect all aspects of the terrifying reality of this crisis.

## **PRICE TRANSPARENCY**

Regarding health care costs...

The Committee came together just yesterday in a bipartisan way to explore ways to lower health care costs with more price transparency and more competition.

This is a top priority for those we serve...

.... yet, your budget says nothing regarding bipartisan efforts to implement and enforce the transparency efforts brought forth during the Trump administration.

Again, this is missing from your budget.

## **NIH-CDC ACCOUNTABILITY**

In addition to lowering costs, the administration needs to take restoring trust in our public health agencies more seriously.

The buck stops with you. Period.

You oversee our public health and preparedness policies under the CDC and NIH.

As I've said, these agencies need to do the hard work of restoring trust with the American people and comply with our oversight before they ask for more money and more authority.

The NIH, in many cases, has failed to be a steward of American taxpayer dollars or ensure lab safety...

...It has stonewalled this committee's requests for information that we're constitutionally entitled to...

...and it refuses to substantively answers questions about what sort of risky gain-of-function research it may fund or what role the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity is playing to keep Americans safe=.

Similarly, the CDC has created a crisis in confidence...

So much so that CDC Director Walensky has undertaken a full-scale reevaluation and reorganization of the agency.

This is because its guidance was used to justify mandates that have more parents questioning routine vaccination...

Its guidance, influenced by the teachers unions, kept schools closed...

...to justify mask mandates on kids.

We know these weren't decisions based on the best science and data from across the world.

Now, our children are paying the price... academically... physically... emotionally.

Like NIH, the CDC does not need more authority... it needs robust oversight.

## **CONCLUSION**

Secretary Becerra, let me be clear: We expect better.

The American people are eager for a brighter future.

We expect a high degree of cooperation from you on policies that will help improve their health and their quality of life.

I hope you leave today with a greater sense of urgency to address these problems in a bipartisan fashion.

Thank you.

