

**Opening Remarks**  
**Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Health Subcommittee Hearing: Department of Health and**  
**Human Services FY25 Budget**  
**April 17, 2024**

**INTRO - BUDGET LOWLIGHTS**

Thank you everyone for being here today.

I wish I could say this hearing is an exciting opportunity to learn more about President Biden and Secretary Becerra's vision for how we can all work together to plow the hard ground necessary to improve the lives of the American people by addressing major issues such as the fentanyl crisis and rising health care costs ...

I wish this budget contained bold, new ideas from the HHS Secretary on how to lower health care costs...

...or at least prioritized implementation and enforcement of existing initiatives to lower health care costs.

Instead, what we have before us today, is a budget request that proposes more than 1.8 trillion dollars in spending for fiscal year 2025 with misplaced priorities throughout.

It prioritizes spending a quarter-trillion-dollars to large health insurance companies to subsidize insurance premiums rather than innovative proposals to lower the actual cost of health care...

...It favors the pursuit of far-left priorities over implementation and enforcement of bipartisan health care laws...

...And it signals to the American people who are struggling under the weight of an overly expensive and complicated health care system, that help is not on the way from this administration.

## **UNRESPONSIVENESS & MISPLACED PRIORITIES**

Secretary Becerra, this is the third time you have testified on an HHS budget before the Energy and Commerce Committee...

... and you have already testified before the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees this year...

If those are any indication, we will hear platitudes about lower drug prices... but nothing on what you have done to lower outrageous hospital bills and empower patients with the ability to know the price they will pay for care up front...

We will hear about what HHS is doing to address climate change... but not what HHS is doing to tackle the fentanyl crisis that is devastating communities and killing hundreds of Americans a day.

We will hear that “you’ll get back to us” – as we have seemingly countless times in the past – on questions of critical importance to the American people.

Secretary Becerra, I hope you prove me wrong.

## **OUTSTANDING INQUIRIES:**

Secretary Becerra, I’ll also raise a very disturbing lack of transparency from the NIH—a subagency under your purview—regarding sexual harassment at the agency and institutions it provides grants to—a very serious issue that this Committee has been investigating for almost three years.

At the direction of your department, Mr. Secretary, the NIH continues to obstruct the Committee and cover for individuals found to have committed sexual harassment or abuse at NIH-funded institutions, including many convicted of crimes.

You need to stop withholding critical information from this Committee, you need to stop protecting sexual abusers. The victims deserve full accountability and justice.

### **INFLATION & CONCLUSION:**

I'll close with a somber reminder: rampant inflation is not behind us...

...the latest reports showed that inflation remains persistently high, and it is compounding, making everyday expenses more and more difficult for American households.

Your failure to propose a responsible fiscal policy shows again how little this administration cares about inflation and the impact it has on everyday Americans.

You are quick to propose more reckless spending, without regard to how it will fuel the fire of increasing prices...

... and then refuse to take any accountability for the harmful result.

I look forward to hearing from you on how you plan to address these concerns. I hope you prove my predictions wrong.

I yield back.