

Chairman Buddy Carter Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Health
The Fiscal Year 2026
Department of Health and Human Services Budget
Tuesday, June 24, 2025 – 10:00 AM

It is my pleasure to begin today's hearing by welcoming the Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to the House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health.

Thank you, Secretary Kennedy, for coming before the Committee to discuss the Fiscal Year 2026 budget for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In 2023, our nation spent an estimated \$4.9 trillion on health care. That's nearly 20 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. And when it comes to per-person health care spending, the United States far surpasses every other nation in the world.

And yet, America's health outcomes still lag behind our peers. Life expectancy in the U.S. is lower than in other developed economies, and rates of infant and maternal mortality, obesity,

diabetes, and heart disease are higher. At the same time, public trust in government health agencies has eroded.

The results of our record-breaking spending speak for themselves — and they're unacceptable.

The system isn't just expensive — it's failing the very people it's meant to serve.

Currently, in the United States, three in four adults experience one or more chronic conditions. In 2013, no state had adult obesity prevalence at or above 35 percent. Fast forward to 2023, 23 states had 35 percent or higher adult obesity rates. According to the CDC, in my home state of Georgia, 35 percent of adults are obese, and one in ten adults are living with three or more chronic conditions.

During my time as a pharmacist, I saw first-hand the toll that diet-related chronic diseases can have on individuals and families, due to rising health care premiums, out-of-pocket costs, and missed work. The financial impact is astronomical — not to mention how taxing the physical, emotional, and mental burdens can be.

Just looking at the impact of diabetes, the United States spends more than \$327 billion each year combatting the disease—with \$237 billion spent on medical costs and another \$90 billion in productivity losses.

America needs a new prescription — a clear, bold vision for the future. We can no longer afford to simply throw more money at this problem and hope for change. It is time to break from the old ways and embrace innovative, courageous ideas that will truly Make America Healthy Again.

I am looking forward to hearing more about how HHS is working to improve health care access for American patients and reduce provider burnout by leading on necessary changes to fix the broken health insurance prior authorization process.

I am also looking forward to hearing more about your agency's plan to reduce unnecessary animal testing. So many of us here today are committed to a more efficient drug development process, and I am encouraged by the FDA's Roadmap to reduce animal testing in preclinical safety studies through the use of innovative 21st-century science.

As a supporter of the FDA Modernization Act 2.0 and the lead author of the FDA Modernization Act 3.0, I am excited to see that, under your leadership, the Department of Health and Human Services is building off of these proposals and leading the charge for the development of safe, effective treatments and therapies without unnecessary animal suffering.

I look forward to hearing additional details of the Secretary's proposal, and to continuing the dialogue between HHS and the Energy and Commerce Committee as we begin the budget process in earnest.

Again, I appreciate you being here today. I look forward to hearing how the proposed HHS budget will advance President Trump's mission of Making America Healthy Again.