

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Health Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2026 Department of Health and Human Services Budget”

June 24, 2025

HHS and its crown jewels, agencies like NIH and FDA, have championed amazing breakthroughs that until this year have accelerated, making us the undisputed world leader in curing disease.

The cancer death rate in the U.S. dropped by 34 percent from 1991 to 2022.

We now have an antiviral that cures Hepatitis C in 95 percent of cases.

And globally, vaccination has saved 154 million lives since 1974.

These achievements were driven by federally funded biomedical research and by public health professionals serving at HHS.

Sadly, the Trump administration, beginning with DOGE’s shocking, mystifying cuts, is imperiling our health and that of future generations.

The Department has created chaos by indiscriminately firing new employees, pushing established experts into retirement, and implementing poorly conceived reductions in force.

These cuts were done haphazardly and without regard to HHS’ needs, present or future.

In addition to inexplicable, chaotic layoffs, the Department has frozen and slashed grants, politicized science, and added bureaucratic red tape.

While some work has been reinstated, in large part due to court orders, every member in this room has heard from public health organizations and research universities in their districts about the abrupt halting of funding.

I don’t have time to go over all the important funding cut just at the University of Colorado, but it includes a researcher studying whether and how airborne contaminants, including glyphosate, impact chronic kidney disease, and another looking into whether viral infection accelerates Alzheimer’s Disease.

Research labs are closing, Americans are dying waiting for care, promising clinical trials are being delayed, and scientific research, which is the lifeblood of our economy, is stopping.

I think we all read the article in *The Washington Post* last week about the Georgia man with metastatic cancer whose treatment in a clinical trial has been delayed because of cuts to essential lab personnel.

Thanks to the chaos this administration has caused, his life is on the line.

Why make these cuts? It's inexplicable.

Many research cancellations appear not to be driven by concerns rooted in science, but in biases completely unrooted in evidence, such as the Secretary's animus towards mRNA technology.

He ignores that COVID-19 vaccination prevented 3.2 million deaths in the U.S. between December 2020 and November 2022.

Under the Secretary's leadership, the MAHA Commission, which met once behind closed doors and conducted an opaque process without public input, released an error-ridden report that misrepresented researchers' work, made up sources, and included AI-hallucinated information.

In looking at chronic disease and how environmental factors influence it the Secretary has identified some real problems.

Those problems demand rigorous study, and I know I and all my colleagues stand ready to work constructively to address them.

The federal workers who were unceremoniously fired could likely have helped develop a useful and informative report.

The Secretary is here today, however, to defend his fiscal year 2026 budget.

This budget is a roadmap to continue the chaos of the past several months and a blueprint for a sicker and poorer America.

This budget seeks to cut NIH by 40 percent.

That means less NIH-funded research, fewer high-quality studies, and a shrinking base of scientific talent in the U.S.

NIH-funded research underpinned nearly every single drug approval in the U.S. from 2010-2019.

In this budget the Secretary calls for eliminating programs to prevent death and disease such as the National Diabetes Prevention Program, the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, and the Safe Motherhood and Infant Health program.

This budget would also train fewer health care providers even as our population ages.

It deeply cuts health care workforce development programs, including those that place new doctors in underserved areas.

We need more doctors, not fewer.

I started by talking about our successes.

These victories were driven by the very programs, researchers, and public health professionals this budget seeks to cut.

As a result of the Secretary's recklessness, I fear the U.S. is quickly losing its international position as the leader in public health and biomedical innovation.

The decline this budget fuels will cost American jobs, and it will cost American lives.

I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the capitol to reject this budget and instead work together to promote health and build on America's greatest success stories.