

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2027 Department of Health and Human Services Budget”

April 21, 2026

Since you last testified before this Committee in June 2025, Secretary Kennedy, our nation’s entire health care system has been driven into chaos thanks to you, this Administration, and Republicans here in Congress. Health care is less accessible and less affordable thanks to the trillion-dollar health care cuts Republicans jammed through last summer to pay for giant tax cuts for the wealthy and Republicans’ refusal to extend the ACA enhanced premium tax credits. Americans’ health, particularly our children’s health, is at risk because of your complete upheaval of our nation’s vaccine infrastructure and the endless barrage of misinformation you have continually spewed to push your ideological agenda.

This Administration actively worked with Congress to pass the Big Ugly Bill that is cutting \$1 trillion from Americans’ health care – the largest health care cut in our nation’s history. You can’t cut that much without dramatically impacting the care Americans receive. And there will be devastating impacts. Fifteen million Americans are expected to lose their health care coverage – forcing people to once again rely on emergency rooms for care and leaving millions of Americans buried in medical debt. It will cut hundreds of billions of dollars to Medicare, reducing access to care for seniors. It strips states of funding to provide health care to their lowest income residents and shuts hospitals and nursing homes – especially those in rural and underserved communities.

As a result of this Republican cruelty, we are watching in real time as hospitals and health clinics are closing at a rapid rate, while states are being forced to slash payments to providers, raise out of pocket costs, and cut benefits.

And this Administration and Congressional Republicans drove up monthly health care premiums for more than 24 million Americans at the beginning of this year because they refused to extend the ACA enhanced premium tax credits. People have seen monthly premiums double or triple – leaving some people with no choice but to go without health insurance altogether.

And now there are reports that Republicans intend to make further cuts and take health care away from more people to pay for Trump’s reckless war of choice in Iran. In Trump’s America, we can’t afford health care, but apparently, we can spend a billion dollars a day in a war with Iran. In fact, Trump himself said that it’s not possible for the federal government to pay for Medicaid and Medicare when we’re fighting wars.

The chaos does not end with skyrocketing costs and coverage losses – Secretary Kennedy is creating chaos and confusion in our nation’s vaccine policy. Your hand-picked anti-vaccine

members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices altered recommendations for multiple vaccines, including measles, hepatitis B, and COVID. These actions left patients, health care providers, and parents confused about what vaccines were recommended when, and whether they would be covered by their insurance. The uncertainty drove skepticism, and make it harder for people to access vaccines that can keep themselves and their families healthy.

At the same time, the Trump Administration has frozen or terminated billions of dollars in scientific research grants and funding, halting ongoing clinical trials to find the next generation of treatments and cures.

While Republicans preached for years about their concerns regarding protecting pharmaceutical innovation, it's quite ironic that they are noticeably quiet now as we watch the United States get left behind as the global leader in medical research thanks to their own Administration's actions.

Mr. Secretary, you are presiding over one of the most consequential departments within the federal government. This is no small job, and unfortunately, your actions are dangerous to health care in our country. It will take decades to repair the damage you have done.

Finally, I want to mention your unprecedented obstruction of congressional oversight and your refusal to respond to our inquiries or requests over the last year. The "radical transparency" that you promised at the beginning of your tenure appears to have been an empty promise. I expect you to fully and respectfully answer the questions of the Democratic Members on this Committee today and to respond to all written requests that we have sent you.

Thank you. And I yield back the balance of my time.