

Good afternoon Members of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis and my fellow panelists. Thank you all, particularly Congressman Clyburn, for extending the invitation for me to serve as a witness in today's hearing. I am Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, assistant professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. I am a viral immunologist, which is a fancy way of saying that I study the immune system's responses to viruses. I, more specifically, use my viral immunology expertise to inform the development of vaccines and therapeutics for coronaviruses and other viruses with pandemic potential. I have over 15 years of experience, and most recently, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, my experience led to co-developing a leading COVID-19 vaccine and therapeutic monoclonal antibodies. Over the past 3 years since the onset of the pandemic, my first-hand experience as a frontline vaccine developer, and moreover empathetic human, is why I am so grateful that you all have convened here to address how we might prepare for the next pandemic, particularly revisiting the lessons learned... good and bad... from COVID-19... The truth is that while we would all like to put COVID-19 behind us, one fact remains: the virus and the medical and social implications of it are here to stay.

Having been a scientist in some capacity since I was 16 years old, I've always been passionate about answering scientific inquiries with experimental diligence and integrity. It has also always been important to me to ensure that the knowledge gained from my experiments is accessible and digestible to the general public. For many of us whose work straddles basic science and public health, the pandemic awakened the direness of that necessity... the direness of "getting it right", both with the science and with

outreach, for the sake of humanity. In the blink of an eye, I, and many other scientists became the public's resource of timely vaccine information and comfort in times of vaccine hesitancy (or as I like to call it "vaccine inquisitiveness") all while we worked tirelessly in the laboratory to answer difficult questions about the virus.

And the work "to get it right" on both fronts continues. There is, of course, a plethora of scientific questions that remain. For example: "What are the underlying causes of many long COVID manifestations?", and "how can we properly treat long COVID?" or "How can we better predict and protect against variants?" And, there is also a plethora of outreach and communication that remains to be done. We must continue to emphasize the importance of increasing vaccine and booster uptake. We must remain steadfast at combating health misinformation.

As I stand here, in light of what some are calling the triple-demic of RSV, flu, and COVID, it is a reminder that we have to continue to zealously fund research across all viruses. This is a moment for us to turn the tide against traditional underinvestment in some research areas so that we are prepared on all fronts. As variants continue to emerge, we must prioritize development of universal coronavirus vaccines and novel therapeutics. And, because we are no strangers to each outbreak shining light on communities that have sometimes been neglected and overlooked, we must be strategic and unwavering in our efforts to increase health equity and tackle long-standing health disparities.

I must gracefully say that I am thankful for many aspects of our country's response against COVID, whether it be the historic vaccine development or execution of funding mechanisms. But, even as I bask in my own victories, I remember how important it is to acknowledge how I can do better the next time. My hope of this hearing is that together we can revel in collective victories, acknowledge our missteps, vow to do better as we continue to fight COVID and other diseases, and lastly build upon the lessons learned in preparation for the next pandemic.