



Chairman Tom Cole

*Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

FY 2016 Budget Hearing – Department of Health and Human Services

February 25, 2015

Opening Statement As Prepared

Good Morning, Madame Secretary. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education for our very first hearing of the year and my first hearing as Chairman. We are looking forward to hearing your testimony.

Madame Secretary, as I've been coming up to speed as a new Chairman, I've been learning more and more about the astounding breadth of programs under your jurisdiction. From overseeing research that we hope will cure diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's, to protecting our people from Ebola and the flu, providing child care and early learning to our littlest Americans, training our next generation of medical professionals, and administering health insurance for our Nation's poor and aging populations, your responsibilities are many.

There are many things in your budget that I think we can all agree are priorities and that we can collectively support. There are others that we may disagree on. The challenge that will be facing this Subcommittee is how we can support the most critical programs, the investments that will give us the greatest bang for the buck so to speak, with the limited resources that we will have available to us.

Your budget assumes many areas of tax increases, new user fees, changes in mandatory spending and other spending sources that are beyond the purview of this Subcommittee to pay for popular program increases. In short, we won't be able to do everything you are proposing. I look forward to having a discussion with you this morning on what the areas of top priority this year are, from your perspective, so that we can invest the tax payer dollars most wisely given our funding constraints.

I would also be remiss if I did not point out the many management challenges facing you at the helm of HHS. From the continuing problems with administering Obamacare to contracting irregularities, backlogs and complaints from medical professionals that seem to have fallen on deaf ears, there seem to be no shortage of areas in need of some improvement. I hope to learn more this morning on what you are doing to take positive steps in these areas.

Finally, there are the many external challenges facing your agency. Threats to cybersecurity, threats from diseases like Ebola and antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and the many challenges of

poverty also land on your doorstep. I look forward to hearing your ideas to combat these this morning as well.

As a reminder to the subcommittee and our witness, we will abide by the 5 minute rule so that everyone will have a chance to get their questions asked and answered.

Before we begin, I would like to yield the floor to my Chairman, the Gentleman from Kentucky, and then to our Ranking Member, the Gentelady from New York, and finally our Subcommittee Ranking Member, the Gentelady from Connecticut, for opening statements.

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