



Chairman Tom Cole

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

**FY 2017 Budget Hearing: Department of Health and Human Services
February 25, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

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

Madam Secretary, 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 and make the very best use of every taxpayer dollar entrusted to us.

Unfortunately 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. I was especially disappointed to see your proposed cut to the National Institutes of Health. Your proposal to divert \$1 billion of biomedical research funds to the mandatory side of the budget ledger and rely on new and, perhaps unlikely, authorizations to continue the advances we have made in increasing research funding were disheartening. I look forward to having a discussion with you this morning on the impact of these proposed cuts.

I will also be asking some tough questions this morning about ongoing management challenges at HHS. Problems of substandard quality in hospitals within the Indian Health Service and a continued slow-walking of investigations into alleged violations of the law as it relates to conscience protections continue to concern me greatly. I hope to learn more this morning on what you are doing to take positive steps in these areas.

Finally, we are all keenly aware of the many external challenges facing your agency. The worldwide concern surrounding the Zika virus is but the latest example of this, and I hope you will be able to update us on this situation today 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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