

Opening statement of Rep. Brett Guthrie  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Hearing on “LIFT America: Revitalizing our Nation’s Infrastructure and Economy”  
March 22, 2021

Thank you for yielding. There are a lot of lessons to be learned from this pandemic on how to strengthen our public health infrastructure. It would be a wasted opportunity to not examine what areas need improvement after being tested from the pandemic of a century and finding solutions to enhance our public health infrastructure. I would like to work together with the Majority on well thought out policies.

That’s why I am so disappointed the Majority put forward bill text on the public health side that was essentially copied and pasted from a 2019 bill. It’s unacceptable - and quite frankly lazy - to take this nearly recycled text from before the COVID-19 pandemic and just bump up the funding numbers. My constituents sent me here to be a thoughtful steward of their hard-earned taxpayer money, and the legislation before us flies in the face of that. Congress has provided billions and billions of dollars in discretionary spending and even more in mandatory spending toward federal, state, and local public health infrastructure projects. This includes workforce, data systems, and laboratory equipment, some of which will still be spent more than two years from now according to CBO. And yet the Democrats want to authorize duplicative streams of funding for nearly identical initiatives, without even bothering to truly understand the need.

We have some time until the COVID-19 money has been fully obligated and spent. This luxury of time will allow us to work together to assess where the gaps are and what will be necessary to maintain the systems we need in a sustainable way. I urge my counterparts to work with us to better understand the needs of our state and local health departments instead of “checking a box” and throwing money at a problem. We must do better than that so we are more prepared for future public health emergencies.