Opening Statement of Republican Leader Brett Guthrie
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
"On the Front Lines: How Governors are Battling the COVID-19 Pandemic"
June 2, 2020

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Chair DeGette, for holding this important virtual hearing today.

I also want to thank the governors for taking the time out of their busy schedules to join us today. These are challenging times, first with responding to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and now with unrest around the country. My home state of Kentucky has been grappling with the tragic death of Breonna Taylor. I appreciate you all coming today as we work together through these issues.

There are a lot of important oversight hearings that we need to have on the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am glad the first Oversight and Investigations hearing is focused on the critical issue of COVID-19 testing.

The federal government and states have faced many challenges in increasing COVID-19 testing capacity. This has been especially true in my home state of Kentucky. In mid-April, Kentucky's daily testing rate was below 20 per 100,000 residents. Thankfully, Kentucky has significantly increased its testing capacity over the last few weeks, and Kentucky has now exceeded the daily average amount of testing recommended by the White House.

The federal government has made substantial efforts for states to increase testing capacity. Given the increased, worldwide demand, there have been shortages for various components needed to collect samples and perform the tests, including swabs, transport media, reagents, and personal protective equipment (PPE). I appreciate how rapidly the federal government, the states, and the private sector have acted to help address these supply issues.

For example, through the Laboratory Diagnostic Testing Task Force, the federal government and industry have developed a better understanding of challenges in the supply chain and expected inventory, and HHS and FEMA have worked diligently to address these issues, including by obtaining swabs and viral transport media for states. The federal government has also used the Defense Production Act to increase domestic production of swabs.

In addition, the FDA is continuously working to promote the development of diagnostic tests for COVID-19 in order to achieve more rapid testing capacity. As of May 27, the FDA had worked with more than 400 tests developers and had authorized 113 tests under Emergency Use Authorizations, including 100 molecular tests, 12 antibody tests, and 1 antigen test.

All of these efforts have enhanced U.S. testing capacity. Over the last month, the U.S. has achieved more than 400,000 tests a day several times, nearly hitting 500,000 tests in a single day last week. States are reaching recommended levels of COVID-19 testing. Kentucky's testing target for May is about 2.95

percent, which exceeds the federal government's recommendation that states test 2 percent of their population in May and June.

The federal government and states are also working diligently to develop and implement testing plans. The Trump Administration recently released an 81-page COVID-19 Strategic Testing Plan. According to the report, HHS anticipates that the U.S. will be able to perform 40 to 50 million tests per month by September, including about 25 million point-of-care tests.

All of this hard work is not only important to improve the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to prepare for a possible second wave of COVID-19 cases. Committee Republicans have been closely examining current issues and how to best prepare for a second wave of COVID-19 cases. Today, we released a report on the first pillar of our work focused on COVID-19 testing and surveillance. We expect to release the rest of the work as it is finalized.

The 50-page report we released today addresses a number of important issues related to COVID-19 testing, ranging from viral detection testing and antibody testing to contact tracing and surveillance.

One issue we examine in this work that I hope we can talk about today is how we can make sure that we are best prepared for the potential overlap of COVID-19 and influenza cases in the fall. The development of combined diagnostic testing kits for both COVID-19 and influenza would allow providers to

quickly determine whether a patient is infected with influenza or COVID-19. The FDA has already issued two EUAs for laboratory diagnostic tests that detect numerous respiratory viruses, including both COVID-19 and influenza. We need to continue to prepare for the possible resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the fall when influenza season begins.

I am looking forward to the conversation. I greatly appreciate all three of our witnesses taking the time out of their busy schedules to testify today.

While we have made a lot of improvements over the last few months, our work is not done. As we continue to work on drafting more legislation responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially important to hear state perspectives.