

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Morgan Griffith
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Virtual Hearing
“No Time to Lose: Solutions to Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations in the
States”**

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As Prepared for Delivery

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

I also want to thank the state public health officials for taking the time to join us today as your vaccination programs are well-underway. The federal government and states are in the middle of a monumental task to vaccinate everyone that wishes to be vaccinated. I appreciate you all attending today as we work together to discuss ways to increase COVID-19 vaccinations.

Ending the pandemic in this country hinges on the efficacy of the national vaccine distribution efforts. This effort includes not only sending vaccines to states, but also getting shots into arms. To date, the federal government has shipped 47 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to states. States have administered 26 million of those doses through their state vaccination plans with 3.1 million doses administered to people in nursing homes or long-term care facilities.

Last week, the U.S. administered nearly 1.6 million doses in one day. This progress is the product of federal and state collaboration, especially extensive planning and investment from the initiative Operation Warp Speed.

Operation Warp Speed was launched in May 2020 to accelerate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines while maintaining safety and efficacy standards. This was a massive undertaking that

combined science, government, the military, and the private sector to provide viable vaccines several years earlier than typical timelines.

The federal government collaborated with states to lend toolkits and resources for planning COVID-19 immunization programs. For example, the CDC released an interim playbook to guide both states and their local partners on how to plan and operationalize a vaccination response. Additionally, in the summer of 2020, the CDC and Operation Warp Speed conducted site visits to develop model approaches for vaccinations through five pilot programs in California, Florida, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Philadelphia.

The federal government also instructed states on how to use vaccines to control the coronavirus. Due to the limited supply of vaccine available, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended priority groups for vaccination. This included health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities to be first in line, followed by older adults and frontline essential workers, all groups with a higher susceptibility to coronavirus. States incorporated these recommendations to execute a deliberate and measured approach for vaccinations.

The federal government worked diligently to distribute millions of doses across the United States. Now, states are working diligently to administer these doses into arms. States have varied in their performance when it comes to administering the vaccine doses that have been allocated and distributed to their states.

States have faced challenges in this complex, logistical operation that have contributed to slower than expected vaccination rates. This is especially true in my home state of Virginia. For example, in Virginia, the state administers 53 percent of the doses it receives from the federal government. In contrast, our neighbors in West Virginia administer 77 percent of their doses. States that are lagging in vaccinations fall in the 40 to 50 percent range, while those that are leading the country administer 60 to 70 percent of the doses they receive.

States are under criticism for how their vaccination campaigns are responding to the demand for shots. States have noted the lack of resources and infrastructure for vaccination, such as the lack of trained personnel to administer vaccines eligibility groups. Additionally, miscommunication to states and providers on the number of doses available has created a chain of logistical issues. States appear to be addressing challenges as they learn lessons along the way, but there is work to be done to improve the process. More resources from the Consolidated Appropriations Act enacted at the end of last year is on the way.

As we continue to work on coronavirus stimulus packages, it is essential to hear state perspectives. With new variants of the virus emerging and case numbers skyrocketing, we need to find solutions as quickly as possible.

I look forward to the testimony from these witnesses and welcome them to the hearing. I yield back.