

**OPENING STATEMENT FOR THE HONORABLE BRETT GUTHRIE
REPUBLICAN LEADER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

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As Prepared for Delivery

Hearing titled, “The Fiscal Year 2022 HHS Budget”

Thank you, Chair Eshoo for having this important hearing, and thank you Secretary Becerra for being here today as we examine the fiscal year 2022 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) budget.

I was alarmed to see the amount of spending that the administration believes we can afford after reviewing the Biden administration’s “skinny budget.” In total, the proposed budget is a nearly 9-percent increase over the amount appropriated for 2020. This increase would be on top of the nearly \$4 trillion Congress has already allocated for the COVID-19 pandemic in the first five COVID-19 relief bills. I supported these relief bills that were focused on providing needed COVID related assistance for our country. \$1.3 trillion of this funding has yet to be disbursed from those relief packages. That doesn’t include the \$1.9 trillion recently authorized from President Biden’s COVID-19 package, which only 9% ended up going towards stopping COVID-19. The HHS budget proposal in front of us today grows HHS by almost a quarter with \$131.7 billion included in the \$1.5 trillion fiscal year 2022 budget.

I agree we need to improve our public infrastructure and better prepare for future public health emergencies; however, as we work on these improvements, we also have the responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

We have seen firsthand how public private partnerships such as Operation Warp Speed (OWS) have allowed this country to get vaccinated and reopen months ahead of our peers around the world. I hope we can work across the aisle to fully evaluate the programs that need support and allocate funding wisely.

There is no doubt that we must continue to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health. In fact, Republicans have worked with Democrats to increase funding for the NIH each year over the past five years. As we look at the budgets of federal agencies that helped with COVID-19 response efforts, we need to assess any increases in the context of their performance.

I specifically want to mention my strong concerns with certain areas of what we know of the proposed budget. First, I am pro-life. I believe in protecting the unborn. I am very concerned with President Biden's comments on removing the Hyde Amendment. Hyde has been around since 1976 and agreed upon for both Republicans and Democrats for its inclusion in appropriations bills for years. I strongly disagree with removing this protection and allowing taxpayer dollars to fund abortion procedures.

Secondly, I would like to speak to the current crisis at our southern border. Last Congress when I served as Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, the Subcommittee held hearings on the management, care, and treatment of unaccompanied children (UC). At that time, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) was experiencing a record number of encounters with UC, and as a result, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) was experiencing a record numbers of referrals.

Since President Biden has taken office, there has been a rush of migrants arriving at the southern border. CBP and ORR are experiencing even higher numbers than they did in 2019. According to CBP data, starting in January, the number of UC and single minor land border encounters each month has been higher than the numbers were during those same months in previous years.¹ As of May 2, 2021, there were over 22,000 UC in ORR's care.² As a result, ORR has had to open several temporary influx care facilities and emergency intake sites but has yet to open one of the temporary influx facilities that the Trump administration kept in "warm" status to quickly stand up for surges in UC referrals. Further, there have been reports of thousands of migrant children being kept in overcrowded Border Patrol facilities for longer than 72 hours. I joined several of my colleagues

¹ <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>.

² <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/uac-program-fact-sheet.pdf>

on this committee to request information from the Biden administration on capacity issues, allegations of abuse, and COVID-19 protocols. While we received responses to some of the questions yesterday, we await answers on the rest. The Biden Administration must get a better grasp on handling this crisis and massive influx of UC referrals.

Secretary Becerra, I appreciate you being here today, and I look forward to hearing your testimony and responses to important questions from my colleagues.