

Opening Statement Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Health Hearing
“The Fiscal Year 2023 HHS Budget”
April 27, 2022
As Prepared for Delivery

INTRO

Welcome back Secretary Becerra to the Energy and Commerce Committee.

My intention today is to be straight with you about the many failures we’re seeing at the Department of Health and Human Services. The department is prioritizing an extreme political agenda, rather than the mission to improve the health and well-being of all Americans.

This is eroding people’s trust in public health and eroding confidence in HHS.

TITLE 42, PHE, COVID

First, there’s the administration’s shameless whiplash of when to use the public health emergency.

The administration’s decision-making isn’t about science. It’s about power and politics.

President Biden wants to lift Title 42 for a radical open border agenda...despite an overdose crisis that is killing more than 100,000 people a year mainly because of illicit fentanyl coming across our southern border.

According to President Biden, there’s no COVID-19 emergency for illegal immigrants... but there **IS** for toddlers in Head Start who are still forced to wear a mask.

Student loans are still deferred—costing taxpayers \$4.3 billion per month and making the inflation crisis worse.

The administration is fighting to keep masks on airplanes.

None of this appears to be rooted in common sense, science, or an awareness of crises in America today.

It's government arrogance. People want their freedom back. This is the land of the free.

They want a secure border.. a healthier future for their children... safer communities...

... and, they want leadership that reflects these priorities.

We are not in the same place we were two years ago.

It's why I asked in February for the administration's plan to properly unwind the PHE.

I have yet to receive a response. It is unacceptable.

ALZ NCD

I also want to discuss the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' unprecedented decision to restrict coverage for an FDA-approved Alzheimer's treatment to **only** 1,300-1,500 people fortunate enough to be in a clinical trial.

Worse yet, this decision applies not only to the recently approved drug, Aduhelm, but an **entire** class of Alzheimer's treatments.

We should trust doctors and patients to decide if an FDA-approved drug is right for them.

FDA determined this drug is safe and effective, including for seniors in the Medicare program.

This decision is a clear second guessing of FDA's authority to determine drug safety.

Democrats may say the drug would bankrupt Medicare...

But it's hard to take that concern seriously when Democrats voted for using savings from their socialist drug price controls to subsidize and inflate health insurance premiums for people not on Medicare.

I urge that radical price controls are not resurrected, and you rethink the NCD.

RADICAL AGENDA

There are many other examples of how your department is losing the public's trust.

Inflation from out-of-control government spending is making everything more expensive, including health care and for seniors on a fixed income.

On your watch seniors are now paying nearly 15 percent more – the largest dollar increase in the program's history.

Yet, bipartisan laws signed by President Trump to lower costs remain unimplemented and unenforced.

- We are still waiting on rules to make it easier for people to know what doctors are in their network for the lowest costs.
- And, we have not seen enforcement against hospitals refusing to post their prices.

It's unclear if lowering costs is a priority.

We certainly know what your top priorities are though:

- Millions of dollars for a climate change office.
- Forcing health care workers to perform abortions on demand.
- Policing speech with Big Tech companies.
- Socialist price controls for fewer cures.

- Colluding with teachers' unions to keep schools closed and kids masked.
- Undermining the rights of parents.
- Avoiding oversight for how taxpayer dollars are spent on risky research in China.
- And, again, open borders instead of cracking down on fentanyl trafficking.

CONCLUSION

This does not inspire confidence.

The HHS budget doubles down on this radical political and socialist agenda where DC knows best.

Our message to HHS today is this. When you're in a hole, stop digging.

Listen to the American people who are saying enough.

Build trust by extending trust to them to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

Restore the mission to improve people's well-being...

... and abandon this agenda with one audience in mind—the extreme and woke Left on Twitter.

They may be the only voices in the White House's echo chamber but they don't reflect real life.

Next time, I hope the HHS budget better reflects all the American people's priorities.

With that Mr. Chairman, I yield back.