

# Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Senate Confirmation Hearing to be Secretary of HHS Day 1

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## Speakers:

Speaker A - 100.0%

## Notes:

No notes.

### Speaker A

00:00:00

Good morning. This hearing will come to order. I thank my colleagues and Mr. Kennedy for being here today. Mr.

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Kennedy, congratulations on your nomination. Throughout this process, Mr. Kennedy, you have been accessible to members and staff on both sides of the aisle and have demonstrated strong commitment to fulfilling the responsibilities of this role. The Department of Health and Human Services oversees our nation's largest health care

programs, providing coverage for nearly two in every five Americans.

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Improving Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP, among other initiatives, presents challenges, especially in the face of a rapidly aging population, stubbornly high costs and persistent barriers to access.

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However, this also provides us an opportunity to deliver bold, transformative solutions. As a committee, we share a commitment to advancing common sense bipartisan policies that improve the delivery of health care in this country. This committee has worked to realign incentives in the prescription drug supply chain to enhance access in rural communities, to expand the availability of telehealth and improve the broken clinician payment structure.

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Across these and other issues, I look forward to working with the administration to continue pursuing meaningful reforms that serve the American people more effectively and more efficiently. Too often, patients encounter a health care system that is disjointed and is a dysfunctional maze.

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Complex and bureaucratic chutes and ladders have become the norm. Meanwhile, even as healthcare spending climbs, outcomes across a range of conditions continue to decline. Mr. Kennedy, if confirmed, you will have the opportunity to chart a new and better course for the federal approach to tackling both the drivers and the consequences of our ailing healthcare system.

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Your commitment to combating chronic conditions that drive health care costs will be critical to our success.

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Prioritizing disease prevention and addressing the factors that fuel conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disease, Alzheimer's disease, COPD and cancer will save lives, reduce costs, and build a healthier, stronger country. Private sector breakthroughs, from groundbreaking cancer medications to curative gene therapies also offer hope. But misguided government initiatives and market volatility risk eroding American leadership in life saving R and D.

Your advocacy for health care transparency has the potential to empower consumers across the country, promoting competition to enhance quality while cutting excessive spending for patients and for taxpayers. Today's hearing will provide a forum to hear more about your vision, particularly for the federal programs under this committee's jurisdiction.

**00:03:21**

Mr. Kennedy, you represent a voice for an inspiring coalition of Americans who are deeply committed to improving the health and well being of our nation. Regardless of political party, everyone in this room shares a common recognition that our current system has fallen short, as well as a common desire to make our country healthier.

**00:03:44**

I look forward to today's conversation as well as your testimony, Mr. Kennedy.

**00:03:49**

And now I recognize Senator Wyden for his opening remarks. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The question before the Finance Committee this morning is whether Robert F. Kennedy should be trusted with the health and well being of the American people.

**00:04:06**

Committee staff have examined thousands of pages of statements, books and podcast transcripts in a review of his record. The receipts show that Mr. Kennedy has embraced conspiracy theories, quacks, charlatans, especially when it comes to the safety and efficacy of vaccines. He has made it his life's work to sow, doubt and discourage parents from getting their kids life saving vaccines.

**00:04:45**

It has been lucrative for him and put him on the verge of immense power.

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This is the profile of someone who chases money and influence wherever they lead, even if that may mean the tragic deaths of children and other vulnerable people. Now, Mr. Kennedy is fond of saying he's not making recommendations about whether parents should vaccinate their children. He's just asking questions and giving people choices. It's a slippery tactic to dodge any real responsibility for his words and actions.

**00:05:29**

And it is, in my view, absurd coming from somebody who's trying to win confirmation for a

job that is entirely about making recommendations. These recommendations are going to have life or death consequences for the American people. Mr. Kennedy, if you are confirmed, your recommendations determine which vaccines senior citizens get for free through Medicare.

**00:05:58**

Your recommendation will determine which vaccines are given to millions of kids.

**00:06:06**

Peddling these anti vaccine conspiracy theories is our chief health officer is going to endanger the lives of kids and seniors across the nation. Just look at what happened when Mr. Kennedy inserted himself into an anti vaccination crisis in the island nation of Samoa. He traveled there himself to push his views and pour fuel on the fire of a measles outbreak that began due to low vaccination rates.

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In the end, 83 Samoans died, mostly kids, from a disease that is easily preventable.

**00:06:51**

Americans cannot afford to import this experiment to our great nation on other health care matters, from abortion to universal health care. Mr. Kennedy has changed his views so often, it is nearly impossible to know where he stands on so many of the basic issues that impact Americans daily lives. In a gobsmaacking statement of irresponsibility in November 2023, Mr.

**00:07:24**

Kennedy said that he wanted to pause infectious disease research for eight years.

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Mr. Kennedy has indicated he's open to restricting access to the abortion medication mifepristone, which remains a primary target of the Republican crusade against reproductive freedom. I took this on back in 1990 when I chaired the first congressional hearing on the topic. The science was clear then. It's even clearer today.

**00:07:55**

Mifepristone is safe. The only reason it's under question in 2025 is because people with a political agenda have been out lying about it. Women deserve to know if Mr. Kennedy will abuse his power as our country's chief health officer to essentially implement a national abortion ban by restricting access to the safe and legal medication.

Meanwhile, as the Trump budget office threw the Medicaid program into chaos yesterday, Republicans in Congress are proposing deep cuts to the program that will rip away health care for millions of Americans who count on this vital lifeline.

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Cuts to Medicaid of this magnitude are going to jack up the cost of health insurance. It'll shutter nursing homes and rural hospitals, deprive seniors and Americans with disabilities of home based care. That approach amounts to handing over our nation's health system to for profit insurance companies who've made a fortune delaying and denying care.

**00:09:00**

Mr. Kennedy has virtually no knowledge or experience in handling these issues.

**00:09:05**

It leaves him unprepared to take on a crisis like the nation witnessed yesterday when the Trump budget office shut down the federal Medicaid payment portal. After a careful review of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. S statements, actions and views, materials that I have reviewed personally and closely, I reached the conclusion that he should not be entrusted with the health and well being of the American people.

**00:09:34**

When he's taken every side of every issue, how can this committee and the American people believe he has anything to say?

**00:09:43**

Let me close by saying I believe more strongly than ever and I have specialized in health care during my time in public service, that we're a turning point with regard to health care in America. There's one word to describe Americans feelings towards the health care system. It's disillusioned. At every single turn. People feel like they're rolling a load of dice, loaded dice when they try to get health care.

**00:10:12**

Americans are justifiably angry, fed up and tired of a system that puts profits over patients. Instead of debating meaningful ways to improve Americans health care. Now the committee is being forced to relitigate settled science about vaccines and whether or not the federal government should help Americans get affordable health care. I know where Democrats on this Finance Committee stand when it comes to an agenda to lower costs and improve care.

I must say I cannot say the same about the nominee sitting in front of me.

**00:10:49**

And let me acknowledge Finally, Mr. Chairman, Terry Mills from Portland, Oregon, who is here to represent Nurses for America. And I'd like to enter a statement from her organization into the record at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**00:11:02**

Without objection.

**00:11:06**

Thank you, Ranking Member Wyden. Mr. Kennedy, in a few moments, you will be given the opportunity to make your opening statement and respond to these attacks and other questions that the members of this committee have. I would say that with regard to the attack on Medicaid that we just heard, that was a false attack.

**00:11:25**

It's been proven false overnight.

**00:11:27**

The Medicaid portal is operating efficiently today and was never intended to be shut down. With gentleman yield. Since he's mentioned my name. There was a significant amount of time yesterday where there was bedlam across the country over the status of the Medicaid portals. I hope it's being corrected.

**00:11:45**

But there were problems all through the day. There certainly were attacks yesterday. The problem has been clarified and the Medicaid portal is fully operational as we speak.

**00:11:58**

Mr. Kennedy, before I turn the time over to you to share your opening statement, I would like to give you a brief introduction. The son of Senator Robert F. Kennedy and nephew of President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Jr.

**00:12:12**

Has been an advocate for consumers since 1985. After graduating from Harvard University, Mr. Kennedy studied at the London School of Economics and received his law degree from the University of Virginia Law School and a master's degree in environmental

law from Pace University. He has founded two advocacy groups and has spent the last 40 years working to restore and protect children's health.

**00:12:40**

He was a former independent candidate in the 2024 presidential election, and President Trump nominated him this year to be the November of 2024 to be the HHS Secretary.

**00:13:01**

In announcing his nomination, President Trump stated, Mr. Kennedy will restore these agencies to the traditions of gold standard scientific research and beacons of transparency and end the chronic disease epidemic and make America great and healthy again. Before you give your opening statement, Mr. Kennedy, I have four obligatory questions that we ask all nominees before this committee.

**00:13:29**

First, is there anything that you are aware of in your background that might present a conflict of interest with the duties of the office to which you have been nominated?

**00:13:40**

No, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. Do you know of any reason, personal or otherwise, that would in any way prevent you from fully and honorably discharging the responsibilities of the office to which you have been nominated? No, I do not.

**00:13:55**

Do you agree without reservation to respond to any reasonable summons to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of Congress if you are confirmed? Yes, I do. And finally, do you commit to providing a prompt response in writing to any questions addressed to you by any senator of this committee? Yes, I do.

**00:14:16**

Thank you, Mr.

**00:14:17**

Kennedy. And before you begin. If you would like to, you may introduce your wife and children. Yes. My wife, Cheryl Hines, is here.

**00:14:26**

My daughter, Kit Kennedy. My son, Bobby Kennedy. His wife, Amaryllis Fox Kennedy. And

my nephew, Jackson Hines is here, too. We welcome you all.

**00:14:39**

Thank you. You may proceed with your statement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Chairman Crape, Ranking Member Wyden, and members of this distinguished committee. I'm humbled to be sitting here today as President Trump's nominee oversee the U.S.

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department of Health and Human Services. I want to thank President Trump for entrusting me to deliver on his promise to make America healthy again. I also want to thank Cheryl and Kik and Bobby and all of my other children who are here today and all the many members of my large extended family for the love that they have so generously shared.

**00:15:23**

Ours has always been a family that has been involved in public service, and I look forward to continuing that tradition. My journey into the issue of health began with my career as an environmental attorney, working with hunters and fishermen and mothers in a small town in the Hudson Valley and along the Hudson River.

**00:15:46**

I learned very early on that human health and environmental injuries are intertwined. The same chemicals that kill fish make people sick also. Today, Americans overall health is in grievous condition. Over 70% of adults and a third of children are overweight or obese. Diabetes is 10 times more prevalent than it was during the 1960s.

**00:16:16**

Cancer among young people is rising by 1 or 2% a year. Autoimmune diseases, neurodevelopmental disorders, Alzheimer's, asthma, ADHD, depression, addiction, and a host of other physical and mental health conditions are all on the rise, some of them exponentially. The United States has worse health than any other developed nation. We spend more on health care, at least double and in some cases triple, as other countries.

**00:16:48**

Last year, we spent 4.8 trillion.

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Not counting the indirect costs of missed work. That's almost a fifth of GDP. It's tantamount to a 20% tax on the entire economy. No wonder America has trouble competing with countries that pay a third of what we do for health and have better



outcomes and a healthier workforce. I don't want to make this too much about money.

**00:17:17**

It's the human tragedy that moves us to care. President Trump has promised to restore America's global strength and to restore the American dream. But he understands we can't be a strong nation when our people are so sick. A healthy person has a thousand dreams. A sick person has only one.

**00:17:41**

Today, over half of our countrymen and women are chronically ill. When I met with President Trump last summer, I discovered that he has more than just concern for this tragic situation, but genuine care. President Trump is committed to restoring the American dream, and 77 million Americans delivered a mandate to him to do just that, due in part to the embrace and elevation of the Make America Healthy Again movement.

**00:18:12**

This movement, led largely by maha moms from every state. You can see many of them behind us today and in the hallways and in the lobbies, is one of the most transcendent and powerful movements I've ever seen.

**00:18:28**

I promised President Trump that if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to put the health of Americans back on track. And I've been greatly heartened to discover a deep level of care among members of this committee, too, both Democrats and Republicans. I came away from our conversations confident that we can put aside our divisions for the sake of a healthier America.

**00:18:53**

For a long time, the nation has been locked in a divisive health care debate about who pays when health care costs reach 20%. There are no good options, only bad ones.

**00:19:07**

Shifting the burden around between government and corporations and insurers and providers and families is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Our country will sink beneath a sea of desperation and debt if we don't change the course and ask, why are health care costs so high in the first place? The obvious answer is chronic disease.

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The CDC says 90% of health care spending goes toward managing chronic disease, which

hits lower income Americans the hardest. The president's pledge is not to make some Americans happy again, healthy again, but to make all of our people healthy again.

**00:19:51**

There is no single culprit in chronic disease. Much as I have criticized certain industries and agencies, President Trump and I understand that most of their scientists and experts genuinely care about American health. Therefore, we will bring together all stakeholders in pursuit of this unifying goal. Before I conclude, I want to make sure the committee is clear about a few things.

**00:20:18**

News reports have claimed that I am anti vaccine or any industry.

**00:20:23**

I am neither. I am pro safety.

**00:20:37**

We'll have order.

**00:20:41**

Please proceed, Mr. Kennedy. I am pro safety. I worked for years to raise awareness about the mercury and toxic chemicals in fish, and nobody called me any fish. And I believe that vaccines play a critical role in health care.

**00:21:01**

All of my kids are vaccinated. I've written many books on vaccines. My first book in 2014, the first line of it is, I am not anti vaccine. And the last line is, I am not anti vaccine, nor am I the enemy of food producers. American farms are the bedrock of our culture, of our politics, of our national security.

**00:21:24**

I was a 4H kid and I spent my summer working on ranches. I went to work with our farmers. I want to work with our farmers and food producers, remove burdensome regulations and unleash American ingenuity. I simply cannot succeed without a full partnership of American farmers.

**00:21:48**

In my advocacy, I've often disturbed the status quo by asking uncomfortable questions.

Well, I'm not going to apologize for that. We have massive health problems in this country that we must face honestly. And the first thing I've done every morning for the past 20 years is to get on my knees and pray to God that he would put me in a position to end the chronic disease epidemic and to help America's children.

**00:22:20**

That's why I'm so grateful to President Trump.

**00:22:23**

The opportunity to sit before you today and seek your support and partnership in this endeavor, I will conclude with a promise. The members of this committee, to the President and to all the tens of billions of parents across America, especially the moms, propelled this issue to center stage. Should I be so privileged as to be confirmed, we will make sure our tax dollars support healthy foods.

**00:22:53**

We will scrutinize the chemical additives in our food supply. We will remove financial conflicts of interest from our agencies.

**00:23:02**

We will create an honest, unbiased, gold standard science at hhs, accountable to the President, to Congress, and to the American people. We will reverse the chronic disease epidemic and put the nation back on the road to good health. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

**00:23:24**

Mr. Kennedy, I will begin. Each of us will have five minutes to ask you questions. And then at the conclusion of the hearing, if there are further questions, there will be an opportunity for those questions to be submitted to you. And I ask that you respond to them promptly.

**00:23:40**

Mr. Kennedy, you have emphasized the importance of nutrition in preventing and managing chronic disease, improving health outcomes and reducing health costs. I share your interest in the relationship between our diet and our well being. And if confirmed, I look forward to partnering with you on those efforts. Would you share with the committee why you are passionate about the nutrition oriented disease prevention and what you have learned?

**00:24:09**

Yes, Mr. Chairman. I had 11 brothers and sisters. I had dozens of first cousins. I was raised in a time where we did not have a chronic disease epidemic.

**00:24:21**

My uncle was president. 2% of American kids had chronic disease. Today, 66% have chronic disease. We spend zero on chronic disease during the Kennedy administration. Today we spend \$4.3 trillion 77% a year with of our kids cannot qualify for military service.

**00:24:43**

When I was a Kid. The typical pediatrician would see one case of diabetes in his or her lifetime. 40 or 50 year career. A one out of every three kids who walks through her office door is diabetic or pre diabetic. The most Recent data from NIH shows 38% of teens are diabetic or pre diabetic.

**00:25:07**

Autism rates have gone from 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 1500 depending on what studies you look at. In my generation today, 70 year old men, 1 in 34. In my kid's generation we've seen this explosion of autoimmune disease, of allergic diseases. This is not just 8 economic issue, it's not just a national security issue.

**00:25:32**

It is a spiritual issue and it is a moral issue.

**00:25:36**

We cannot live up to our role as an exemplary nation, as a moral authority around the world. And we're writing off an entire generation of kids. Thank you very much. And if confirmed, how could we work together to integrate nutrition based interventions into our health care programs like Medicaid and Medicare? Well, there are many ways that we can do that.

**00:26:02**

Federal funding of the SNAP program, for example, and of school lunch programs could be a driver for helping kids. We shouldn't be giving 60% of the kids in school processed food that is making them sick. We shouldn't be spending 10% of the SNAP program on sugar drinks. So we have a direct ability to change things there.

**00:26:29**

We also in Medicaid and Medicare, we need to focus more on outcome based medicine, on putting people in charge of their own health care, making them accountable for their own

health care so they understand the relationship between eating and getting sick.

**00:26:49**

Most importantly, we need to deploy NIH, FDA to doing the research to understand the relationship between these different food additives and chronic disease so that Americans understand it and make sure that Americans are away. But I don't want to take food away from anybody. If you like a McDonald's cheeseburger, Diet Coke, which my boss loves, you should be able to get them.

**00:27:18**

If you want to eat Hostess Twinkies, you should be able to do that. But you should know what the impacts are on your family and on your health.

**00:27:27**

Thank you, Senator Wyden. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin my questions, I'd like to start by entering into the record a letter the committee received from Ambassador Carolyn Kennedy outlining what she believes is Mr. Kennedy's lack of personal fitness for the office.

**00:27:43**

Without objection, Mr. Kennedy, you have spent years pushing conflicting stories about vaccines. You say one thing and then you say another. In your testimony today under Oath, you denied that you were anti vaccine. But during a podcast interview In July of 2023, you said, quote, no vaccine is safe and effective.

**00:28:08**

In your testimony today, in order to prove you're not anti vax, you note that all your kids are vaccinated. But in a podcast in 2020, you said, and I quote, you would do anything, pay anything to go back in time and not vaccinate your kids. Mr. Kennedy, all of these things cannot be true.

**00:28:35**

So are you lying to Congress today when you say you are pro vaccine or did you lie on all those podcasts?

**00:28:43**

We have all of this on tape, by the way. Yeah, Senator, as you know, because it's been repeatedly debunked. That statement that I made on the Lex Friedman podcast was a fragment of this statement. He asked me and anybody who actually goes and looks at that

podcast and we'll see this, he asked me, are there vaccines that are safe and effective?

**00:29:07**

And I said to him, some of the live virus vaccines are.

**00:29:11**

And I said, there are no vaccines that are safe and effective. And I was going to continue for every person, every medicine has people who are sensitive to them, including vaccines. He interrupted me at that point. I've corrected it many times, including on national tv. You know about this, Senator Wyden, so bringing this up right now is dishonest.

**00:29:34**

Let's be clear about what you've actually done then, since you want to deny your statements. For example, you have a history of trying to take vaccines away from people. In May of 2021, you petitioned the Food and Drug Administration to not only block Americans from having access to the COVID vaccine, but to prevent any future access to the life saving vaccine.

**00:30:02**

Are you denying that your name is on the petition? We brought that petition after CDC recommended COVID vaccine without any scientific basis or six year old children.

**00:30:19**

Most experts agree today, even the people who did it back then. Covid vaccines are inappropriate for six year old children who basically have a zero risk of. That's why I brought that lawsuit. I don't want to. I want to emphasize, Mr.

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Kennedy, the facts. The facts, Kennedy to the audience. Comments from the audience are inappropriate and out of order. And if there are any further disruptions, the committee will recess until the police can restore order. Please follow the rules of the committee.

**00:31:12**

Mr. Kennedy, you may proceed. I also want to point out that your recitation of what happened in Samoa is absolutely wrong. And you know it's wrong. And you know it's wrong.

**00:31:24**

We'll get to that in a moment. Right now we're talking about the petition that you filed to block Americans from having access to the vaccine and to prevent any future access to the vaccine. Those facts are on the record. My third question to you is you made almost \$5 million from book deals, mostly promoting junk science.

**00:31:47**

2021, In in a book called the Measles Book, you wrote that parents had been, quote, misled into believing that measles is a deadly disease and that measles vaccines are necessary, safe, and effective.

**00:31:59**

The reality is measles are, in fact deadly and highly contagious. Something that you should have learned after your lives contributed to the deaths of 83 people, most of them children, in a measles outbreak in Samoa. So my question here is, Mr. Kennedy, is measles deadly? Yes or no.

**00:32:19**

The death rate from measles, historically in this country, in 1963, the year before the introduction to the vaccine, was 1 in 10,000. Let me explain what happened in Samoa. In Samoa, in 2017 or 2015, there were two kids who died following the MMR vaccine.

**00:32:44**

The vaccination rates in Samoa dropped precipitously from about 63% to the mid-30s. So they've never been very high. In 2018, two more kids died following the MMR vaccine, and the government in Samoa banned the MMR vaccine. I arrived a year later when vaccination rates were already below any previous level. I went there.

**00:33:10**

Nothing to do with vaccines. I went there to introduce a medical informatics system. I would digitalize records in Samoa and make health delivery much more efficient. I never gave any public statement about vaccines. You cannot find a single Samoan who will say I didn't get a vaccine because of Bobby Kennedy.

**00:33:32**

I went in June of 2019. The Measles Housebreak started in August. Clearly, I had nothing to do with the measles. Not only that, Senator. Not only that.

**00:33:41**

If you let me finish, you have had some time. If you let me finish, Senator. If you Let me

finish. 83 people died when the tissue samples were sent to New Zealand. Most of those people did not have measles.

**00:33:57**

We don't know what was killing them. The same outbreak occurred in Tonga and Fiji, and no extra people died. There were seven measles outbreaks in the 13 years prior to my arrival. Would like to get my time back. The nominee wrote a book saying that people had been misled into believing that measles is a deadly disease.

**00:34:18**

He's trying now to play down his role in Samoa. That's not what the parents say. That's not what Governor Greene says. It's time to make sure that we blow the whistle on actually what your views are. At least we're starting.

**00:34:30**

We need to move on. Senator, I support the measles vaccine. I support the polio vaccine. I will do nothing as HHS secretary that makes it difficult or discourages people from taking. Anybody who believes that ought to look at the measles book you wrote saying parents have been misled into believing that measles is a deadly disease.

**00:34:51**

That's not true. We need to move on. Senator Grassley, welcome.

**00:34:59**

I'm going to do like I did in my office. I'm just going to make some points to you. I got about seven I want to quickly get done and then at the end I'm going to ask if you disagree with anything I say and then address those things you disagree with. I'll make sure I save time for you to do that.

**00:35:20**

A key responsibility of each member of Congress is oversight.

**00:35:24**

Oversight allows us to hold bureaucrats accountable to the rule of law and it helps keep faith with taxpayers. I expect HHS to provide timely and complete responses to congressional oversight number two, PBMs, something you and I discussed in our office. I've been working to hold pharmacy benefit managers accountable in order to lower prescription drug prices.



I expect you to work with us to hold PBMs accountable and that may even asking your support for legislation that's before the Congress drug pricing. Senator Durbin and I have for a while been trying to get a bill passed that requires price disclosures on TV ads for prescription drugs.

**00:36:15**

Knowing what something costs before buying it is just common sense. President Trump tried to do this by regulation in his first term. Vice President Vance co sponsored our bill last Congress. I ask you to support this bill or if you can do it by regulation, to do it by regulation. On rural health care.

**00:36:40**

The previous administration dragged its feet in opening up slots for rural community hospital demonstration programs. It also ignored concerns from rural pharmacies when implementing changes to Medicare Part D and ignored rural needs when it comes to distributing physician residency slots. I expect you to prioritize rural Americans health care needs. On agriculture. In our meeting earlier this month, we talked at length about agriculture.

**00:37:14**

You preface the conversation by saying you will not have jurisdiction over these issues. I expect you to leave agricultural practice regulations to the proper agencies and for the most part that's USDA and EPA on dietary guidelines. I've sent letters to the Secretaries of Agriculture, hhs, requesting that they provide information regarding conflicts of interest on the Dietary Guideline Advisory Committee.

**00:37:47**

To increase transparency, I expect you to provide Congress with confidential financial disclosures from the Advisory Committee before finalizing dietary guidelines. So we know that nobody has a vested interest in it, is having undue influence.

**00:38:07**

Lastly, HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement Oversight. Last year I expanded my investigation into HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement. I wrote two dozen contractors and grantees whose job it is to place unaccompanied children with sponsors. In many cases, children have been placed with improper vented sponsors, placing them at risk of trafficking. The Biden Administration's HHS directed these taxpayer funded contractors and grantees to not respond to my inquiry.

This is obstruction by the executive branch. I expect you to produce to me the records and data I've requested and instruct HHS contractors to fully cooperate with my investigation. I also expect HHS to not retaliate against any whistleblowers, including Those who identify Oors Orr's failures in vetting sponsors unaccompanied. You got 45 seconds, so respond if you want to.

**00:39:26**

I agree with all of those provisions, Senator.

**00:39:31**

My approach to administration. HHS will be radical transparency. If members of this committee or other members of Congress want information, the doors are open. I've spent many years litigating against NIH and its sub agencies. I mean HHS and its sub agencies, nih, cdc, fda, on FOIA issues, trying to get information that we, the taxpayers, paid for and oftentimes getting back redacted copies after a year or two years of litigation.

**00:40:07**

That should not be the case. And if Congress asks me for information, you will get it immediately. Thank you. Thank you. Senator Cantwell is next, but until she returns, I will move on down the list.

**00:40:19**

And that would be Senator Cornyn. Mr. Kennedy, welcome to you and your family. And congratulations. I appreciate Senator Grassley raising the issue of the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the auspices of Health and Human Services.

**00:40:34**

I think this may surprise people, but that's actually the responsibility of hhs. The Office of Resettlement Relocation. Under the previous administration, as Senator Grassley alluded, There were roughly 500,000 children, unaccompanied minors, that were placed with sponsors in the interior of the United States. The previous administration took the position that it was not the federal government's responsibility once these children were placed with these sponsors.

**00:41:05**

But the New York Times, in a series of investigative stories, pointed out that tens of thousands of these children, when they tried to follow up and find out how they were doing, whether they were going to school, whether they were being trafficked or abused,

there was no answer.

**00:41:22**

And they took the position it was not their responsibility. So I look forward to working with you to find those children and to make sure that they're not being abused.

**00:41:35**

Millions of Americans are experiencing mild to moderate mental health and substance abuse issues, yet many struggle with timely and effective access. Primary care physicians are most likely to be seeing these individuals as opposed to a specialist. And it makes it important that these individuals, primary care physicians, be trained in patient centered care, which would strengthen the integration of, of behavioral health care with primary care services.

**00:42:05**

Is this something that you are concerned about, something you'd be willing to work with us on in order to implement? Yes.

**00:42:13**

Senator, let me just reassure you that President Trump has personally spoken to me about locating those 300,000 children who disappeared over the last four years. I don't think anybody has a fully accurate number, but it's hundreds of thousands. I agree. And many of them, we know, have been sex trafficked and childhood slavery.

**00:42:35**

And it is a blight on America's moral authority.

**00:42:39**

And we need to find those kids. In terms of addiction services and substance abuse services, this is a priority for me. It was a priority for me when I was running for president. During my campaign. I was a Heroin Addict for 14 years.

**00:42:58**

I in 42 years in recovery. I go to 12 step meetings every day. So I hear the stories every day and I hear the many stories about denial of the barriers to access to care and we need to improve that. And answer specifically to your question, I think we can do that through gme, which is a, a program that is funded by HHS that is the largest funder for medical school students.

That's one of the things for primary care physicians should understand addiction care. Addicts almost always go through a cycle where there is a moment where they hit periodic bottoms, where they're ready to go into treatment. But it's fleeting and it's momentary and we have that opportunity to save their lives. And then if we miss that little short window, they're off to the races again.

**00:44:05**

I appreciate your answer. Our time is short. Let me get to one more question that I think is very important. Under the first Trump administration, the number of people receiving HIV treatment in Africa through the President's emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, otherwise known as PEPFAR, it increased, this is during the first Trump administration, from 13 million people to 18 million people across 50 countries, primarily in Africa.

**00:44:35**

Africa has about 1.3 billion people today, or in 2021.

**00:44:40**

It's projected to have 2.5 billion people by 2050, or 25% of the global population. In 2020, PEPFAR reported that 2.8 million babies were born without HIV. That was something that would not have happened but for the PEPFAR program. So it has simply been one of the most successful public health programs in the world and saved approximately 26 million lives.

**00:45:11**

Failure to continue this program, in my view, would risk ceding that leadership to adversaries like China.

**00:45:18**

And I'd like to know whether you support the objectives and goals of PEPFAR, and would you work with me and my colleagues to make sure that this program continues to provide life-saving antiviral drugs to people who are most in need? I absolutely support PEPFAR and I will, I will happily work with you to strengthen the program.

**00:45:41**

Thank you, Senator Bennett. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**00:45:44**

Thank you, Mr. Kennedy, for being here this morning. And I think that, Mr. Chairman, we are truly through the looking glass this morning here in the U.S. Senate.

And this committee is being asked to fulfill a really important responsibility, which is to decide whether to confirm Mr. Kennedy to one of the most important healthcare jobs in America. And the reason I think it's so important is for many of the reasons you said in your opening statement, which is that we live in the richest country in the world and we have some of the worst health outcomes of any industrialized country in the world.

**00:46:24**

We live in the richest country in the world and we have some of the lowest life expectancy rates of anybody in the industrialized world. I was a school superintendent before I was in this job, Mr.

**00:46:40**

Chairman. And I can tell you that Mr. Kennedy's right. You know, that when I look at the kids in the Denver Public Schools, if we don't change the way we eat in this country, 40% of them are going to suffer adult on site adult diabetes as a result of their diet. These are, and we're, as I said, spending more than any other country in the world.

**00:47:04**

And our families, every single person's constituents in this Senate, are facing chronic shortages when it comes to health care. My friend from Texas, Senator Cornyn, has been a champion on mental health care. We have an epidemic, as he knows, across this country in mental health care, partly because of what the massive social media platforms that were sitting behind the President of the United States have inflicted on our children for their profit in the last decade or so.

**00:47:39**

So we have no shortage of challenges to confront. And I even agree with some of the diagnosis of he spent 50 years of his life not honoring the tradition that he talked about at the beginning of this conversation, but peddling in half truths, peddling in false statements, peddling in theories that create doubt about whether or not things that we know are safe are unsafe.

**00:48:10**

Not that every vaccine in America is unsafe, not that you can't possibly have an adverse reaction, but that parents and children in my old school district and school districts, all this country, would be better off not getting vaccinated than getting vaccinated. Unlike his own children who were vaccinated, unlike the people he invited to his house in Los Angeles for their party who were vaccinated for everybody else.

It's about peddling these half truths, and he says it with such conviction that you want to believe him. And, Mr. Kennedy, I just have some.

**00:48:48**

There are many, many things in the record, but I hope that you could answer these questions, yes or no. I've tried to ask these in a manner that's faithful to what you actually said, because I didn't want to have a debate about whether you actually said them. So I'm asking you yes or no, Mr.

**00:49:04**

Kennedy. Did you say that COVID 19 was a genetically engineered bioweapon that targets black and white people but spared Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese people?

**00:49:16**

I didn't say it was deliberately targeted. I just. I just quoted an nih, funded an NIH published study. Did you say that it targets black and white people but spared Ashkenazi disease? I quoted a study, you, Honor.

**00:49:33**

I quoted an NIH study that showed that. I take that as certain raises. I have to move on. I have to move on. Did you say that Lyme disease is highly likely a materially engineered bioweapon?

**00:49:48**

I made sure I put in the highly likely. Did you say Lyme disease is a highly likely militarily engineered bioweapon? I probably did say that. Did you say that? And that's what the paper.

**00:50:01**

Of course. I want all of our colleagues to hear it, Mr. Kennedy. I want them to hear it. You said.

**00:50:06**

Yes. Did you say that exposure to pesticides causes children to become transgender? No, I never said that. Okay. I have the record that I'll give to the chairman, and he can make his judgment about what you said.

**00:50:20**

Did you write in your book, and it's undeniable, that African AIDS is an entirely different disease from Western AIDS? Yes or no, Mr. Kennedy? I'm not sure if I may. Okay, I'll give it to the chairman, Mr.

**00:50:35**

Kennedy. And my final question. Did you say, on a podcast, and I quote, I wouldn't leave it abortion to the States? My belief is we should leave it to the woman. We shouldn't have the government involved, even if it's full term.

**00:50:52**

Did you say that, Mr. Kennedy? Senator, I believe that every abortion is a tragedy. Did you say it, Mr. Kennedy?

**00:50:59**

This matters. It doesn't matter what you come here and say. That isn't true. That's not reflective of what you really believe that you haven't said over decade after decade after decade. Because unlike other jobs we're confirming around this place, this is a job where it is life and death for the kids that I used to work for in the Denver Public Schools and for families all over this country that are suffering from living in the richest country in the world that can't deliver basic health care and basic mental health care to them.

**00:51:33**

It's too important for the games that you're playing, Mr. Kennedy. And I hope my colleagues will say to the president, I have no influence over him. I hope my colleagues will say to the President, out of 330 million Americans, we can do better than this. Thank you.

**00:51:51**

We need to move on. Senator Cassidy, Mr. Kennedy, President Trump has sworn to protect Medicare. Republicans are exploring reforms to Medicaid that could help pay for Trump administration priorities. With this context, what will you do about dual eligibles?

**00:52:14**

About dual eligibles? Well, dual eligibles are not right now served very well under the system. Those are people who are eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare. And, you know, the. I suppose my answer to that is to make sure that the programs are consolidated, that they're integrated and the care is integrated.

**00:52:43**

I look forward to working with you, Dr. Cassidy, on making sure that we take good care of

people who are too ill. And how would we, how do you propose that we integrate those programs? Does Medicare pay more? Medicare pay less.

**00:52:57**

Medicaid pay more. Medicaid pay less. How do we do that? Well, I'm not exactly sure because I'm not in there. I mean, it is difficult to integrate them because Medicare is under a fee for service.

**00:53:14**

It's paid for by employer taxes. Medicaid is fully paid for by the federal government, and it's not fee for service. So it's. I don't. I do not know the answer to that.

**00:53:32**

I look forward to exploring options with you. Republicans again, are looking at ways to potentially reform Medicaid to help, you know, pay for President Trump's priorities, but to improve outcomes. What thoughts do you have regarding Medicaid reform? Well, Medicaid is not working for Americans, and it's specifically not working for the target population.

**00:53:59**

Most Americans, like myself.

**00:54:01**

I'm on Medicare Advantage and I'm very happy with it. Most people who are on Medicaid are not happy. The premiums are too high. The deductibles are too high, the networks are narrow, the best doctors will not accept it in the best hospitals. And particularly, Medicaid was originally designed for a target population, the poorest Americans.

**00:54:25**

It's now been dramatically expanded. The irony of the expansion is that the poorest Americans are now being robbed. Their services have dramatically decreased. Even though we've increased the price of Medicare by 60% over the last four years, the target population is being robbed to figure out other options. Obviously you've thought about that and I appreciate that.

**00:54:52**

What reforms do you recommend again, that would improve services, I suppose, but also make it more cost efficient. President Trump has given me the charge of improving quality of care and lowering the price of care for all Americans. There are many things that we can



do. I mean, we want to. The ultimate outcome, I think, is to increase transparency, increased accountability, and to transition to a value based system rather than a fee based system, rather than a service based system.

**00:55:31**

On Medicaid in particular, can you just kind of take those kind of general principles and apply it to the Medicaid program? You know, listen, I think that there is many, many options with telemedicine, with AI right now. And you know, there's a, including direct primary care systems. We're seeing that movement grow across the country.

**00:55:56**

There is one of the largest providers.

**00:56:01**

So going back to Medicaid, though, and speaking of these specific advances, how would you, what reforms are you proposing with these ideas vis a vis Medicaid? Well, I don't have a broad proposal for dismantling the program. I'm not saying, of course not saying that. I think what we need to do is we need to experiment with pilot programs in each state.

**00:56:24**

We need to keep our eye on the ultimate goal, which is value based care, which is transparency, accountability, access.

**00:56:33**

And one more thing going back to Medicare, you mentioned you're an ma. You mentioned earlier the Medicare fee for service. Do you have any kind of thoughts as to whether or not patients on fee for service should move into MA or how should we handle that? Whether patients who are on Medicare fee for service and traditional Medicare, yes, that's their choice right now.

**00:56:59**

I mean, we have, I think 32 million Americans or 30 million Americans on Medicare, on traditional Medicare and then another 34 or 34 on Medicare Advantage, roughly half and half.

**00:57:16**

And I think more people would rather be on Medicare Advantage because it offers very good services, but people can't afford it. It's much more expensive. In answer to your first question, there are all kinds of exciting things that we can be doing, including

cooperatives, which President Trump has supported, including health savings accounts, which President Trump has supported.

**00:57:45**

All of these things to make people more accountable for their own health. And so we'd bring the cooperatives and the health savings accounts into Medicare and Medicaid.

**00:57:53**

Exactly. We try to. We try to increase those, the use of those, and to direct primary care to continue to transition into a value based program that is private. Americans don't, by and large, do not like the Affordable Care Act. People are on it.

**00:58:17**

They don't like Medicaid, they like Medicare, and they like private insurance. We need to listen to what people. They would prefer to be on private insurance. Most Americans, if they can afford to be, will be on private insurance. We need to figure out ways to improve care, particularly for elderly, for veterans, for the poor in this country.

**00:58:43**

And Medicaid, the current model is not doing that. I would ask any of the Democrats who were chuckling just now, do you think all that money, the \$900 billion that we're sending to Medicaid every year has made Americans healthy? Do we think it's working for anybody? Are the premiums low enough?

**00:59:04**

We do need to move on, Senator Warner. Well, I gotta tell you, for literally hundreds of thousands of Virginians, Medicaid is what prevents them from health crises on a daily and weekly basis and some imaginary new plan. And if there was a new plan that was to be the basis of what Trump was going to do when repealing Obamacare, I would have thought by now we would have seen it.

**00:59:32**

I got to tell you. Listen, Senator.

**00:59:34**

Can I remember. Senator. Mr. Kennedy, I got questions. I appreciate our visit.

**00:59:39**

I know you take your views seriously and I don't reflexively vote. I voted for four of President Trump's nominees. Already got a lot of grief from folks on this panel. But I gotta tell you, I saw an email that you put out Monday night, or your campaign did. In a fundraising email, your presidential campaign celebrated that the freeze on all new regulations, guidance and announcements is a way to protect unelected bureaucrats from further undermining our health freedom.

**01:00:12**

Then you ask your donors to help pay for your campaign debt. Did your campaign and you put out that. I don't think my campaign exists anymore. Well, listen, I got to tell you this. Somebody's out there soliciting money for it.

**01:00:25**

Maybe you ought to find out who is. So the fact that you celebrate this freeze, do you think that was a good idea to put all of this on hold for 90 days funding and any kind of further work? NIH Research as chairman Crapo pointed out, I'm not asking for I love Mike Crapo.

**01:00:46**

I'm asking you. You're up very, very important position.

**01:00:49**

As he pointed out. Senator, the were closed, were not closed as a result of the Trump administration. Let me just tell you, I'd like to explain, excuse me, sir, I'd like you to explain to a domestic violence center in Richmond that's saying because this freeze they may have to close down. Where are those battered women to go?

**01:01:06**

Or a rural nonprofit I've got in the Chino Valley who's saying that freeze is going to potentially shut down their ability to operate.

**01:01:16**

So I don't, I guess if you deny or don't know what your campaign's sending out, you don't know if you raised a lot of money Monday night. I'm saying that Trump administration, you don't know if you raise a lot of money. The Trump administration has made clear and it does not want to freeze benefits for any Americans under Medicaid or Medicare.

**01:01:36**

And I do not want to freeze is affecting beyond Medicare and Social Security. I would hope you would have known that to be able to answer some of this.

Now, you've said publicly you want to immediately get rid of 600 NIH workers on job one. On day one when we had our meeting, you said you actually like to get rid of 2,200 people from HHS. Which offices are you going to start cutting and ridding these 2,200 workers from? Senator, there's 200 political appointees that are changed during every administration.

**01:02:14**

So if you got rid of those 200 political appointees, you're not going to replace them with your political appointees.

**01:02:18**

Well, President Biden this year changed 3000 employees at HHS. 3750. You're 2200. What departments are you going to pick them from? Well, the same as President Biden did when he changed 3,000 out to a minute, minute 30.

**01:02:38**

The chairman's been generous with colleagues on both sides and may have to go a couple minutes over. But let me just say so let's just answer this would be this, I hope since you're asking to become the top health care official in the United States in terms of hhs, huge ramifications. And part of this job is to be the senior adviser to the president on health issues.

**01:03:00**

So when we're looking at this purge and we're looking at laying off workers, when we're looking at potentially the president's illegal offer to try to buy out federal employees, which I would say to any federal employees, think twice. Has this individual in his business world ever fulfilled his contracts or obligations to any workers in the past?

**01:03:22**

But if you are in this position, will you pledge that you will not fire federal employees who work on food safety, work on trying to preventing things like Salomono? Senator, there are 91,000 employees. So that. I take that as I take it that's a simple yes, and I'm going to take that as a no.

**01:03:40**

I take that as a no.

**01:03:42**

Will you actually, we talked about protecting Americans from cybercriminals, something

we need to do a lot more on. Will you commit not to fire anyone in the health arena who currently works on protecting Americans from cyber attacks in their health care files? I will. I will commit to not firing anybody who's doing their job based on your opinion.

**01:04:08**

Based upon your opinion or your political agenda or Mr.

**01:04:11**

Trump's political agenda. Based upon my opinion. I guess that means a lot of the folks who've had any type of views on vaccines will be out of work. Will you freeze grant funding for community health centers? Will you freeze federal funds for community health centers the way the current administration, the White House has made clear, and no funds are going to be denied to any American for benefits.

**01:04:41**

Listen, any program. Do you know what happens at community health centers? Those are direct. Are you talking about the Indian health centers? No, I'm talking about community health centers across the country.

**01:04:50**

I understand that. I mean, I strongly support. So you're going to excuse Indian health centers, which is good, but others are not. They're going to get their funds frozen. I strongly support community health centers, as does the president.

**01:05:02**

So does that mean you're not going to freeze the funding that is currently frozen? White House is clear that none of that funding is supposed to be frozen. Sir. The direct payments are different than how the government operates. We fund the federal government down to community health centers.

**01:05:18**

As a former governor, there's lots and lots of state programs that are related to health care that come from the federal government. They come down to the state, then it goes to local programs. All of those don't directly pay out a dollar at a time, but they come from federal funding. They are all, you know, even though they keep changing the guidance on a minute by minute basis based upon 9:45 or 10:30 or 10:45, whatever time it is today, those funds are still frozen.

**01:05:48**

Sir, I just, honestly, I want to give you a fair shot, but I don't feel like.

**01:05:55**

I don't feel like you approach this job with the knowledge and Candidly, your willingness, not willingness not to commit, try to recommend to the President to make sure these funds are unfrozen and that people's lives were at stake is a very disappointing answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Lankford. Mr.

**01:06:16**

Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. It's good to see you again. We had some great visits in my office.

**01:06:20**

We've done some follow up calls to be able to go through. You and I have talked about 100 different issues and backgrounds and things. You've been able to address a lot of them today and just different questions to be able to clear up social media rumors and the things that are out there on it.

**01:06:32**

So I do appreciate that. We've talked about pharmacy benefit managers, we've talked about the nursing home rule the Biden administration put down.

**01:06:37**

We talked about your views on agriculture and commercial and row crop agriculture. We've talked about food issues. And you made it very, very clear you're not going to tell Americans what to eat. But you do want Americans to know what they're eating. And I think that's a pretty fair perspective on that.

**01:06:53**

I do want to talk to you about some areas that you and I have talked about as well. We have some disagreements, you and I, on the issue of life and when life begins on that. You've been very outspoken on that and we've had some good opportunities to be able to talk about that.

**01:07:05**

Title 10 is specifically in the HHS area. This has been an area that has been interpreted for a long time.

And President Trump in the first administration interpreted that rule to say that his administration will prohibit the performance referral for promotion of abortion as a part of the Title 10 program. That he made that very clear in the first administration. Obviously that's his decision to make again on that, on how he wants to handle that.

**01:07:29**

And he's made a lot of public statements on that. The Biden administration not only reversed that, not only rescinded that rule, but they went one step the other direction.

**01:07:37**

In my state in Oklahoma, as you and I have talked about, the Biden administration cut off funding to the state of Oklahoma for AIDS testing, for breast cancer screening and for other areas of poverty health care. Because my state didn't promote abortion. It wouldn't provide if my state wouldn't promote abortion in the states.

**01:07:58**

We got cut off for federal funds for AIDS testing and for other things. My simple question to you is how are you going to handle Title 10 on that?

**01:08:07**

I saw how President Biden handled that in the punitive measures that came on my state for those that are in rural health care. How are you going to handle title I'm going to support President Trump's policies on Title 10. I agree with President Trump that every abortion is a tragedy. I agree with him that we cannot be a moral nation if we have 1.2 million abortions a year.

**01:08:29**

I agree with them that the states should control abortion.

**01:08:34**

President Trump has told me that he wants to end late term abortions and he wants to protect conscientious exemptions and that he wants to end federal funding for abortions here abroad. That's title 10. I'm going to. I serve at the pleasure of the President. I'm going to implement his policies.

**01:08:53**

Thank you for that. President Biden, when he came in, immediately closed down the Office of Civil Rights and Conscience Protections within hhs. There's a statement that's come out recently that he's going to reopen that office again to be able to protect the civil rights of

Americans. One of the things that Javier Becerra did immediately when he came into HHS was conscience protections for medical professionals that were being compelled against their conscience to perform medical procedures that violated their conscience.

**01:09:20**

Javier Becerra stepped in immediately into HHS and withdrew that and said, no, the federal government will tell you what you believe about these issues.

**01:09:28**

You don't have conscience protections anymore and refuse to protect those folks. Will you step in and say that health care individuals have the right of conscience again, as the federal law allows? Yeah. I mean, the first thing that occurs to me when you ask that question is what patient would want somebody doing a surgery on them that believes that surgery is against their conscience being forced to perform that.

**01:09:53**

I don't know anybody who would want to have a doctor performing a surgery that the doctor is.

**01:10:00**

Is morally opposed to. Listen, I came from a family that was split on life and choice. I have cousins today who believe that abortion at any stage is equivalent to homicide. Now, there are other people who believe the opposite. But the good thing in my family that I really loved is that we were able to have those conversations and respect each other.

**01:10:30**

And I wish that we could do that nationally.

**01:10:36**

If forcing somebody to participate in a medical procedure as a provider that they believe is murder does not make any sense to me. We need to welcome diversity in this country. We need to respect diversity, and we need to respect each other when we have different opinions and not, you know, not force our opinions on other people.

**01:11:03**

Yeah. Thank you for that.

**01:11:04**



The fda, under the Biden administration, changed the rules for the chemical abortion drug and said, you no longer need to see a physician. So if you have an ectopic pregnancy or all kinds of don't even go anymore to see a physician. But they also changed an area that has been something that's been very particular.

**01:11:21**

You've talked about a lot and that's transparency. They changed the position and said don't tell us if there's a side effect on this drug unless she dies.

**01:11:30**

But other than that, don't tell us anymore. Literally, don't give transparent information to the American people or to the women who take this drug anymore. We don't want that reported. My question to you is, will FDA move to be able to actually give transparency to the American people and to say this drug is no different than any other drug, we don't are going to protect it just because it's political for some folks.

**01:11:51**

People should know side effects on this drug and there should be reporting.

**01:11:55**

Yeah. I mean, it's against everything we believe in this country that patients or doctors should not be reporting adverse events. We need to know what adverse events are. We need to understand the safety of every drug, mifepristone and every other drug. And President Trump has made it clear to me that one of the things he is not taking a position yet on mifepristone, a detailed position, but he's made it clear to me that he wants me to look at safety issues and I'll ask NIH and FDA to do that.

**01:12:36**

Thank you, Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, chairman. Mr. Kennedy, I only have five minutes with you and I've got a lot of experience with cms, so you're just going to have to listen. Two things.

**01:12:54**

One, if you want to move from advocacy to public responsibility, Americans are going to need to hear a clear and trustworthy recantation of what you have said on vaccinations, including a promise from you never to say vaccines aren't medically safe when they in fact are. And making indisputably clear that you support mandatory vaccinations against diseases which where that will keep people safe?

You're in that hole pretty deep. We've just had a measles case in Rhode island, the first since 2013, and frankly, you frighten people. Two, I want to air harms that Rhode island has experienced from a remorseless, senseless CMS bureaucracy.

**01:14:04**

CMS has for years maintained a reimbursement system that the bureaucracy could never explain, never justify, that persistently pays Rhode island providers less than neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut providers. A differential of 23 and 26% in our regional health care market. The Pending Ahead program can begin to remedy this, at least for value based care.

**01:14:39**

And it must. There has to be payment parity in the region.

**01:14:44**

Rhode Island's health care system is bleeding out because we aren't paid what neighboring hospitals and doctors are paid and the one act CMS took on this years ago was to make it worse. The CMS bureaucracy has also attacked one of the best accountable care organizations in the country, Rhode Island's Integra family doctors tried to throw them off the shared savings program because they said Integra years ago briefly fell 137 patients short of of the 5,000 patients that ACOs need.

**01:15:27**

CMS wouldn't listen until a court found that to be unjustified, likely illegal, irreparable harm to this high performing ACO and its patients and contrary to the public interest. That must stop Last CMS has refused to approve waivers granted elsewhere for Rhode island from rules that are stupid for Medicare patients who are nearing the end of their days.

**01:16:01**

Here's what families see.

**01:16:04**

Granny is home dying. She needs to transfer to a nursing home and Medicare insists on putting her three days and two nights in a hospital. Expensive. Frightening to Granny and the family and stupid. Granny's home dying and can't get palliative and curative care together.

**01:16:26**

Inhumane and stupid. Granny's home dying and can't get home care if she can still get out

into the yard or be driven to see the shore, to see Narragansett beach, say one more time to recall childhood memories before she dies. Inhumane and stupid. Granny's home dying and the family's exhausted. And the respite care benefit is not to send a nurse or a caregiver but to stuff Granny in an ambulance and haul her off to a hospital.

**01:17:03**

Some respite. It's all expensive, frightening, inhumane and stupid. But the insensate CMS bureaucracy takes a court order to be awakened to the harm they cause. I have had enough. CMS should let Rhode island try humane end of life care through cmmi.

**01:17:33**

Let's see if it works at a state. I bet it will save money, serve families better at a very, very delicate time, and perhaps even make a model for better health care everywhere. I've said a lot. My time is out. You're welcome to respond in writing.

**01:17:50**

I ask unanimous consent that the order declaring CMS's actions to constitute irreparable and illegal harm be put into the record. Without objection. Let me just respond very briefly, Senator Whitehouse. I'm an implacable enemy of tyrannical insensate bureaucracies and stupid roles. And I will work with you to make CMS responsive to the needs of Rhode island and to remedy those disparities that you talk about.

**01:18:27**

I am familiar with the Integra health plan and it is a template for what we ought to be doing is a value based plan. And I look forward to you to making sure that we create pilot programs like this, unfortunately around the country. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, one of the things I've learned in my tenure in the Senate is that a nominee saying that they're willing to work with me amounts to exactly zero.

**01:18:58**

We need to get this fixed.

**01:18:59**

Thank you. Well, I guess at that point then we will move on to Senator Dades. Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**01:19:08**

Mr. Kennedy, I'm glad to see you here this morning. I listened to your opening remarks and you mentioned that you want to make HHS the gold standard of science. I have found

my engagements with you both behind closed doors in my office as well as listen to you publicly to be very thoughtful and science based.

**01:19:30**

I applaud that.

**01:19:31**

I thank you for that. And I realize this will likely be a very partisan vote on this committee and on the Senate floor, but let the record state there are three medical doctors on this side of the dais. I'm a chemical engineer. We believe in science. I'm thankful that you do too, and you made that comment in your opening remarks.

**01:19:52**

I want to talk about agriculture for a moment. We talked about our common love for Montana. You've been to Montana? Many times. It's a wonderful state.

**01:20:01**

A lot of folks have discovered it. They watch the show Yellowstone and people are coming and moving into our state. But it's an amazing place. But as you know, agriculture is our top economic driver in Montana. We produce some of the highest quality crops, the best livestock in the country and the world.

**01:20:21**

Our farmers and our ranchers are truly some of the most effective environmental stewards in ensuring we have a safe food supply chain in the world. I share your view that protecting the integrity and safety of our food supply is of utmost importance. I appreciate the research happening in places like Montana State University to help farmers produce resilient, healthy and safe crops as well as their agricultural practices.

**01:20:52**

You mentioned you were a 4H kid growing up. I think our 4H kids and our FFA kids are some of the best kids in America.

**01:20:59**

My question for you, Mr. Kennedy, is if confirmed, as I'm listening to my farmers and ranchers talk about the future, will you commit to working collaboratively with partners at USDA at the relevant federal agencies, as well as our Montana farmers and ranchers, before implementing any policy that might affect or impact food supply.

Absolutely make that commitment. I have, as I shared with you, a personal commitment and a long career working with farmers. I want to make sure I understand the very, very narrow margins, the slim margins at American farmers and ranchers are dealing with.

**01:21:46**

And I don't want, under my watch, as a single farmer to have to leave his farm for economic reasons or for regulatory or bureaucratic reasons while I serve, if I'm privileged to serve, to be confirmed as HHS secretary. Even more important, President Trump has a very, very strong commitment to farmers. President Trump is probably historically, in modern history, the best farm president in our history.

**01:22:20**

Farm income spiked for the first time in decades under his last administration. He got solid support from farmers across the country.

**01:22:31**

Farm country is Trump. Country farmers across the country supported him during this election. He has specifically instructed me, and he wants farmers involved in every policy and that he wants me to work with Brooke Rollins at USDA to make sure that we preserve American farmers, that all of our policies support them. Mr.

**01:22:55**

Kennedy, thank you.

**01:22:56**

And if confirmed, I look forward to having you and Brooke Rollins out to Montana, spend some time with you. Have my commitment to come there anytime, particularly during ski season or hunting season. Deal. I want to shift gears for a moment. As we discussed in the meeting we had in my office, mifepristone was approved in 2000.

**01:23:19**

The FDA has been under scrutiny and brought to court for failure to properly assess this drug, as well as subsequent deregulations Senator Langford described that occurred over the past 25 years. Some of these deregulations included ending the requirement that these drugs be prescribed by a doctor, ending reporting requirements for adverse events, and allowing these pills to be obtained through the mail.

**01:23:47**

In fact, the FDA's own prescribing label mentioned that 3 to 5% of women taking this drug

end up in the emergency room. My question is, if confirmed, as secretary of hhs, will you commit to working with the FDA Commission to review these deregulatory actions that are threatening the safety of women?

**01:24:16**

Sorry, Senator. As I said to Senator Lankford, I think it's immoral to have a policy where patients are not allowed to report adverse events and where doctors are discouraged from doing that. President Trump has asked me to study the safety of mifepristone. He has not yet taken a stand on how to regulate it.

**01:24:44**

Whatever he does, I will implement those policies.

**01:24:47**

I will work with this committee, make those policies make sense. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. Senator Hassan. Thank you, Mr.

**01:24:56**

Chair and Ranking Member Wyden. And welcome, Mr. Kennedy, and to your family as well. I want to start with a couple of concerns I have, and just briefly, on Medicaid. States share in the funding of Medicaid.

**01:25:10**

Millions of disabled children in this country are alive because of Medicaid. Millions of people with addiction in this country are in recovery because of the services provided to them by Medicaid. And millions of chronically ill people who until Medicaid expansion was enacted, who couldn't get health care and therefore couldn't work because they were too sick, got health care through Medicaid expansion, then went back to work and now they're on private insurance.

**01:25:36**

So those are some facts about Medicaid that you might want to brush up on. Now, I'm also extremely concerned about your endorsement of radical fringe conspiracies that if implemented at hhs, would put American families lives at risks.

**01:25:53**

Vaccines are one of our greatest public health triumphs. And you don't need. I'm not talking about abstract medical science. One of the people who helped raise me was my grandfather who was a pediatrician. He practiced medicine in this country from 1921 until

the mid-1980s.

**01:26:09**

And I heard details about the difference those vaccines made in saving lives in the children who were under his care. Vaccination has helped to eradicate many deadly diseases in the United States, including polio and smallpox, something we should be proud of as Americans. I am extremely concerned that as Secretary you would be able to halt critical vaccine research and to exploit parents natural worries by advising them not to vaccinate their children.

**01:26:38**

This will lead to more children getting sick and some will even die. Before the measles vaccine.

**01:26:45**

About 500 American children died a year from measles. This is too much of a risk for our country and there is no reason that any of us should believe that you have reversed the anti vaccine views that you have promoted for 25 years. For example, you have previously falsely suggested that the polio vaccine killed many, many, many, many more people than polio ever did by causing fatal cancers.

**01:27:13**

While rigorous safety studies show that to be completely false. Now let's go to something we agree upon.

**01:27:22**

I am really heartened to see that one area where we agree on is on women's reproductive freedom. In your own words, it's not the government's place to tell people what to do with their bodies. You said that, correct? Yes. Yep.

**01:27:38**

Mr. Kennedy, in 2023 you came to New Hampshire and said, quote, I'm pro choice, I don't think the government has any business telling people what they can or cannot do with their body. So you said that, right? Yes. Yep.

**01:27:52**

But you also said we need to trust the women to make that choice, because I don't trust government to make any choices. You said that, too. Yes. It is remarkable that you have such a long record of fighting for women's reproductive freedom. And really great that my

Republican colleagues are so open to voting for a pro choice HHS secretary.

**01:28:13**

So, Mr. Kennedy, I'm confused. You have clearly stated in the past that bodily autonomy is one of your core values. The question is, do you stand for that value or not? When was it that you decided to sell out the values you've had your whole life in order to be given power by President Trump?

**01:28:32**

Senator, I agree with President Trump that every abortion is a tragedy, that we can't be a moral authority in this country. Right. So. But that isn't what you said back in New Hampshire in 2023. My question is, exactly when did you decide to sell out your life's work and values to get this position?

**01:28:50**

Senator, I agree with President Trump that every abortion is a tragedy. So what you're telling us, just to be clear, because my time is limited, is that regardless of what you believe, regardless of what values you have, if President Trump tells you to do something, you're going to do it. You said just now the discussion about mifepristone.

**01:29:10**

Oh, he's asked me to study the safety of it. Here are the safety studies that tell us mifepristone is safe and effective.

**01:29:19**

And I asked Mr. Chair that these 40, about 40 studies be admitted to the record by unanimous consent without objection. So the studies are there, the safety is proved, the science is there. But what you're telling us is if President Trump orders you to take action to make it harder for women to get direly needed health care, you'll follow his order.

**01:29:42**

If Mr.

**01:29:43**

Trump, as he did yesterday, orders a halt on Medicaid payments that are essential for taking care of people with disabilities all around this country, you're going to follow that order because you are willing to sacrifice your values, your knowledge, if President Trump tells you to do that, that, to me, is unacceptable in a Secretary of Health and Human Services.



As I explained before, the White House has issued a statement saying that there was that that policy will not deprive any American. Yeah. The problem is the White House issued that statement only after we pointed out the damage it would do, and it became politically uncomfortable for them.

**01:30:29**

You know what else that freeze on federal funding did it halted funds for critical research that could cure pediatric cancer. So if the President tells you to do that, you're going to stop that too. That's enough. Thank you, Senator Cortez. Masto is Next.

**01:30:52**

Thank you. Mr. Kennedy, thank you for coming into my office and having the conversation that we did. I appreciate your passion and your belief and you've spent years really talking about the issues that matter to you and I appreciate that. Let me ask you a couple of questions though.

**01:31:12**

I just need some clarification. Right now there's a 40 year old law that requires hospital ERs accepting payment from Medicare to actually provide emergency care to patients. So let's say a woman experiencing a life threatening condition like a heart attack goes to the er. As a lawyer, you would agree that that federal law protects her right to emergency care, correct?

**01:31:37**

Yes.

**01:31:39**

So now a pregnant woman with life threatening bleeding from an incomplete miscarriage goes to the er. Let me rephrase that. So you can hear a pregnant woman with a life threatening bleeding from an incomplete miscarriage goes to the er and her doctor also determines that she needs an emergency abortion. But she's in a state where abortion is banned.

**01:32:07**

You would agree also as an attorney, that federal law protects her right to that emergency care, correct?

**01:32:17**

I don't know. I mean, the answer to that is I don't know if this is. Well, let me ask you this

as an attorney. Doesn't federal law preempt state law? The federal Constitution does sometimes.

**01:32:30**

Not every federal preemptive. State laws could be unconstitutional. I'm not trying to be evasive, Senator, I'm just telling you. I don't. I appreciate that, but what authority do you have over this as the director of hhs?

**01:32:46**

What authority do I have? Yeah. To enforce the law. In what regards? To make sure that a hospital that receives payment from Medicare is ensuring that they are providing the necessary emergency care to patients when they present.

**01:33:04**

It's actually the EMTALA law. So what authority as HHS director do you have with respect to emtala? My understanding is that I have budgetary power and that it's pretty much limited to that. But if you tell me I have another authority, I don't even think that. Well, let me tell you, we have a law enforcement branch at hhs.

**01:33:24**

Actually you do, and that's cms. CMS actually investigates complaints of EMTALA violations as well as the Health and Human Services Inspector General, who by the way, was just recently fired by Donald Trump. So you will be enforcing EMTALA laws and it's important that you understand their impact and don't play politics with the patient presenting at the ER based on a position that this administration has taken.

**01:33:53**

Let me ask you another question. When we met in my office, you said about lowering drug prices, that when big Pharma price gouges, the American people suffer.

**01:34:04**

I think we both agree on that. And I think you're sincere in your belief that you want to reduce prices for Americans, correct? Yes. Yeah. The Inflation Reduction act empowered Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices.

**01:34:19**

It penalizes drug companies for price hikes above inflation, and it caps seniors out of pocket drug costs, along with reducing insulin prices to \$35 per month. But your future boss, Donald Trump, on his first day in office, revoked President Biden's executive order

that actually directed the health Secretary to examine ways to reduce drug prices and improve access to innovative therapies for the American people.

**01:34:52**

And unfortunately, Republicans in Congress want to repeal the Inflation Reduction act, which means reversing all of those things that we worked on to lower prices for Americans. So my question to you is, what do you do? Why are you there?

**01:35:10**

Are you there to be a rubber stamp to this administration and cave into all of these positions that they're taking, even though you know they're in disagreement with your positions on lowering drug prices and that they could harm Americans? How do you handle that as HHS director? Senator, my understanding is that the White House issued an executive order, I believe, today, supporting the drug negotiations under the ira.

**01:35:40**

President Trump was very aggressive during his first term about negotiating drug prices. He has instructed me, and I've met with him repeatedly on as, that we need lower prices, seniors in this country.

**01:35:55**

And so let me ask. Others are. Let me ask you this because I only have so much time. So we've already negotiated lowering prices for 10 drugs with big Pharma. And Big Pharma, by the way, opposes this.

**01:36:08**

They have not only are asking for a pause, they have filed lawsuits, but we've already negotiated the first 10 drugs, and we want to expand it to the next 10 to 15 that the Biden administration has put forward. Would you agree and continue that path of really mandating that Big Pharma come to the table and negotiate drug prices for Medicare so we can lower those prices for Americans.

**01:36:31**

My understanding is that the executive order that was issued today, which I haven't seen, but I've read a summary of it. But let me ask you this then, because you keep citing the Trump administration and you're just going to follow what they say, is that what you're doing. You're just a rubber stamp for them in this position.

**01:36:46**

So anybody. So it doesn't matter that you're before us. It could be anybody coming before us, as long as they're a rubber stamp for this administration and disregarding your beliefs and what you think. I guess my question to you is if it really is fundamental to what you believe, how do you live with that?

**01:37:01**

How do you address those issues as you're moving forward, knowing that it's going to harm Americans?

**01:37:06**

Yeah. You want me to answer the question? No, I'm asking you. Okay. President Trump has asked me to end the chronic disease epidemic and make America healthy again.

**01:37:20**

Is that the only reason why you're at 18? Is that the only reason why then you're at the HHS to address that one issue? President Trump has asked me because I'm in a unique position to end that, and that is what I'm doing. And if we don't solve that problem, Senator, all of the other disputes we have about who's paying and whether it's insurance companies, whether it's providers, whether it's HMOs, whether it's patients or families, all of those are moving deck chairs around on the Titanic.

**01:37:54**

Our ship is sinking.

**01:37:56**

Our 60% increase in Medicaid over the past four years is the biggest budget line now, and it's growing faster than any other. And no other nation in the world has what we have here. No other nation has a chronic disease. We have the highest chronic disease burden of any country in the world.

**01:38:18**

During COVID we had 16% of the COVID deaths in a country.

**01:38:22**

We only have 4.2% of the world's population. We had a higher death count than any country in the world. And when CDC was asked why, he said it's because Americans are the sickest people on Earth. The average person who died from COVID American had 3.8 chronic diseases. This is an existential threat economically, to our military or health, to our sense of well being.

And it is a priority for President Trump. And that's why he asked me run the agency. And if I'm privileged be confirmed, that's exactly what I'll do.

**01:39:02**

Senator Barrasso, thanks so much. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Kennedy, thank you for taking time to visit with with me in my office prior to today's hearing to talk about a lot of the important issues affecting healthcare in my home state of Wyoming as well as the nation. And I appreciate your willingness to serve our country.

**01:39:17**

During our meeting, we discussed the challenges that healthcare providers and patients are facing in rural America, financial obstacles facing rural hospitals, workforce shortages, issues of ob GYN and then new regulations that are painful that have come out of the Biden administration hurting our ability to provide nursing home staffing. So let me start, if I could, with rural hospitals and the closures of hospitals like that.

**01:39:42**

There are a lot of challenges facing hospitals in rural communities and frontier areas. We have 33 hospitals in Wyoming. 26 are really located in areas locations often hard to get to.

**01:39:55**

Weather impacts them. Six of the hospitals are at risk of closing. Two are at immediate risk of closing. In the next two years, 10 have had to cut available services. And this is a concern of rural hospitals in both Republican and Democrat states.

**01:40:10**

Either way, bipartisan, critical that the workforce challenges, financial challenges that we're facing are addressed. Can you commit to working with us on a plan to address the critical nationwide issue of rural healthcare? Yes, as a senator and I would say that during my visits I visited almost 60 senators of our the most common unifying, I would say, issue among both Democrats and Republicans, there were two.

**01:40:41**

One was PBM reform and the others were all hospitals. Our nation made a commitment over 100 years ago to put up a hospital within 30 miles of every American.

**01:40:54**

We generally succeeded in doing that. It's absolutely critical. It's life saving. And rural hospitals are closing at an extraordinary rate right now. They not only provide important

health care for the localities, but also there are economic drivers for localities all over this country.

**01:41:17**

President Trump is determined to end the hemorrhage of rural hospitals and he's asked me to do that through use of AI, through telemedicine, which these are innovations that I saw the other day. A Cleveland clinic has developed an AI nurse that you cannot distinguish from a human being that has diagnostics as good as any doctor.

**01:41:46**

And we can develop, we can provide concierge care to every American in this country, even those the remote parts of Wyoming, Montana, Alaska, et cetera. We also have opportunities at HRSA and at the GME to finally live up to GME's mission of providing personnel to rural hospitals. And I intend to use all of my power because I've seen the priority that is given by both Democrats and Republicans on this committee.

**01:42:24**

I intend to make that a priority if I'm privileged to be confirmed. I appreciate it because often with financial strains on a local hospital, one of the common services to be cut in rural hospitals and maternity services. And now we have women in Wyoming having to drive over 100 miles to access care.

**01:42:43**

13 counties in Wyoming don't have access to OB and we're talking counties larger than the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, counties larger than those whole states. So will you commit to working with my office to find solutions to help address these specific maternal health challenges in rural America?

**01:43:01**

Yes, Senator, I look forward to it. Another issue we specifically spoke about with this harmful Biden administration rule that have really been bad for our rural nursing homes. And it's a rule that would triple the registered nurse requirements in nursing homes. This is going to lead. There just aren't enough registered nurses in our state to be able to comply with this.

**01:43:22**

This would lead to nursing home closures across our state. Will you commit to working with me to fix this serious problem that was a result of a rule that came out by the Biden administration who clearly doesn't understand rural America? Yes, Senator. I think the rule

was well intentioned. But as you've said and I've heard from many rural senators, it will be a disaster for their states.

**01:43:45**

Some of the nursing homes, these are staffing rules that require 24 hour staffing by medical professionals. Some of the nursing homes in rural areas simply do not have the available personnel or the economics to be able to do that. It will mean the closure of nursing homes in rural areas across our country, which means the parents, elderly parent, will be moved a great distance from the local community and their family.

**01:44:14**

We know that the single greatest driver of high quality nursing home care is the involvement, the proximity of family members. When you move that nursing facility away from the community where the kids live, you're going to get much worse care.

**01:44:34**

So the intention, although it was noble, was in reality for rural areas at least, it is going to be a disaster. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**01:44:46**

Senator Johnson, Mr. Kendi, welcome. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your decades long advocacy for a clean environment for children's health.

**01:45:03**

I can't say as I'm surprised by the hostility on the other side. I'm highly disappointed in it. I don't know if you remember when you called me up and you were contemplating setting your political differences aside, joining forces with President Trump on an area of agreement addressing chronic illness, trying to find the root cause of all these problems facing this nation.

**01:45:30**

My first response was, Bobby, this is an answer to my prayers. We need to get to the answers of this, but even more, we need to heal and unify this divided nation.

**01:45:43**

I'm not necessarily the most optimistic guy because we've got enormous challenges facing this nation, but I thought, wow, here's somebody from the left, somebody I don't agree with on many issues, politically, coming together with President Trump and focusing on an area of agreement, something that the American people desperately want, finding out the

answers.

**01:46:11**

What has caused autism? What is causing chronic illness? Ms. Candy, I know.

**01:46:19**

I think I've come to know what's in your heart. I think I know the personal and political price you've paid for this decision.

**01:46:29**

I want to say publicly, I thank you for that. I truly appreciate what you're doing here.

**01:46:39**

Can't we come together as a nation and do this?

**01:46:47**

Can we do. Aren't you getting tired of this? I'm getting tired of this. So, again, Mr. Kennedy, I need to enter in the record, These are just 11 letters of support signed by 63,000 people, thousands of doctors from the American Association, Association, American Physicians and Surgeons, Independent Medical alliance, the North Carolina Physicians and Freedom Group, Governor Jeff Landry from Louisiana.

**01:47:17**

These are Americans, nonpartisan. A lot. A lot of these people I know because I've advocated with you. A lot of them are Democrats. They put their political differences aside.

**01:47:29**

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to enter this in the record. Without objection, I also do want to. Mr. Kennedy, as long as I have you here.

**01:47:37**

I've written over 70 oversight letters to the federal health agencies under the Biden administration. I've virtually gotten squat out of them. Okay, What I get is we get, for example, 50 pages of Anthony Fauci's emails, redacted, by the way. The latest one was 17 pages. Instead of issuing a health alert on the myocarditis they knew was impacting young men early in 2021, instead of issuing an alert on the Health Alert network, they developed 17 pages of talking points.



This was given to the public under a FOIA request. They had to go to court. They've got a new way of redacting. They don't black things out. They just give you white pages, so you don't even know what they have redacted.

**01:48:33**

So, again, I've issued a subpoena now to cover the information I've requested in 70 oversight letters. My question to you is, as Secretary, HHS, will you honor these requests from Congress, and will you make HHS transparent? Yeah. My approach, hhs I said before, Senator, is radical transparency. Democrats and Republicans ought to be able to come in and get information that was generated at taxpayer expense, that is owned by the American taxpayer.

**01:49:08**

It shouldn't get redacted documents. Public health agencies should be transparent if we want Americans to restore trust in the public health agencies. We need transparency. The. You know, I want to say something about what you first said when I launched my campaign, it was about uniting Americans, Democrats and Republicans.

**01:49:34**

There's no issue that should unite us more than this chronic health epidemic. There's no such thing as Republican children or Democratic children. These are our kids. 66% of them are damaged. I know what a healthy kid looks like because I had so many of them in my family.

**01:49:53**

I didn't know anybody with a food allergy growing up. Peanut allergy. Why do five of my kids have allergies? Why are we seeing these explosions in diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, neurological diseases, depression, all of these things that are related to toxic in the environment. Why can't we just agree with each other to put differences about so many issues, intractable issues aside, and say we're going to end this?

**01:50:24**

I don't think anybody is going to be able to do this like I have because of my peculiar experience, because I've litigated against these agencies. When you litigate against them, you get a PhD in corporate capture and how to unravel it. I've written six books about these agencies. I know a lot about them and I know how to fix it.

**01:50:47**

And there's nobody who will fix it the way that I do because I'm not scared of vested

interests.

**01:50:53**

I don't care. I'm not here because I want a position or a job. I have a very good life and a happy family. This is something I don't need. I want to do this because we're going to fix it.

**01:51:06**

And the other thing is, we are attracting a caliber of people to HHS like never before in history. And they're entrepreneurs, they're disruptors. They're innovators of immense talents that are walking away, many of them, from growing concerns. They're not coming there or positioned. They're coming there because they want to save our country.

**01:51:28**

And they're from across the political spectrum. And all these Democrats are opposed to me for partisan issues. They used to be my friends agreed with me on all the environmental issues I've been working on for my whole career. Now they're against me because anything that President Trump does, any decision he makes, has to be lampooned, derided, discredited, marginalized, vilified.

**01:51:56**

We need to move on.

**01:51:58**

Senator Warren. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, Mr. Kennedy, I want to start with something that I think you and I agree on, and that is that Big Pharma has too much power in Washington.

**01:52:10**

You said that President Trump asked you to, quote, clean up corruption and conflicts. Sounds great. You've said that you will, quote, slam shut the revolving door between government agencies and the companies they regulate. That also sounds great. So here's an easy question.

**01:52:31**

Will you commit that when you leave this job, you will not accept compensation from a drug company, a medical device company, a hospital system, or a health insurer for at least four years, including as a lobbyist or a board member? Can you just repeat the last part of the question? Can I commit?

You're not going to take money from drug companies in any way, shape or form. Me?

**01:52:54**

Yes, you. Oh, yeah. I'm happy to commit to that. Good. That's what I figured.

**01:52:59**

I said it's an easy question to start with, and I think you're right on this question. I don't think any of them want to give me money, by the way. Let's keep going. You're right. Because to say yes, because every American has the right to know that every decision you make as our number one health officer is to help them and not to make money for yourself in the future.

**01:53:25**

So I want to talk more about money. I'm looking at your paperwork right now. In the past two years, you've raked in \$2.5 million from a law firm called Wisner Baum. You go online, you do commercials to encourage people to sign up with Wisner Baum to join lawsuits against vaccine makers. And for everyone who signs up, you personally get paid.

**01:53:50**

And if they win their case, you get 10% of what they win. So if you bring in somebody who gets \$10 million, you walk away with a million dollars. Now, you just said that you want the American people to know you can't be bought. Your decisions won't depend on how much money you could make in the future.

**01:54:10**

You won't go to work for a drug company after you leave hhs.

**01:54:14**

But you and I both know there's another way to make money. So, Mr. Kennedy, will you also agree that you won't take any compensation from any lawsuits against drug companies while you are secretary and for four years afterwards? Well, I'll certainly commit to that while I'm secretary, but I do want to clarify something, because you're making me sound like a shilling.

**01:54:45**

I put together that case. I did the Science Day presentation of the judge on that case to get it into court without a hearing. Mr. Kennedy, it's just a really simple question. You've taken in \$2.5 million.

I want to know if you will commit right now that not only will you not Go to work for drug companies. You won't go to work suing the drug companies and taking your rake out of that while you're a secretary and for four years after. It's just I'll convince it's not taking any fees from drug companies while I'm secretary.

**01:55:20**

I. I'm asking about fees from suing drug companies.

**01:55:25**

Will you agree not to do that? You're asking me to not sue drug companies and I'm not going to agree to that as much as you want. I not going to agree to not suit our companies or anybody. So let's do a quick count here of how as secretary of hhs, if you get confirmed, you could influence every one of those lawsuits.

**01:55:51**

Well, let me start the list.

**01:55:53**

You could publish your anti vaccine conspiracies, but this time on US government letterheads. Something a jury might be impressed by. You could appoint people see vaccines vaccine panel who share your anti vax views and let them do your dirty work. You could tell the CDC vaccine panel to remove a particular vaccine from the vaccine schedule.

**01:56:15**

You could remove vaccines from special compensation programs which would open up manufacturers to mass torts.

**01:56:22**

You could make more injuries eligible for compensation even if there is no causal evidence. You could change vaccine in court processes to make it easier to bring junk lawsuits. You could turn over FDA data to your friends at the law firm and they could use it however it benefited them. You could change vaccine labeling.

**01:56:42**

You could change vaccine information rules.

**01:56:44**

You could change which claims are compensated in the vaccine injury compensation

program. There's a lot of ways that you can influence those future lawsuits and pending lawsuits while you are secretary of HHS and I'm asking you to commit right now that you will not take a financial stake in every one of those lawsuits so that what you do as secretary will also benefit you financially down the line.

**01:57:16**

I'll comply with all the ethical guidelines. That's not the question you and I you have said. You're asking, Senator.

**01:57:23**

You're asking me not to sue vaccination pharmaceutical companies. Yeah, you are. That's exactly what you're doing. Look, no one should be fooled here. As Secretary of hhs, Robert Kennedy will have the power to undercut vaccines and vaccine manufacturing across our country.

**01:57:45**

And for all of his talk about follow the science and his promise that he won't interfere with those of us who want to vaccinate his kids, the bottom line is the same. Kennedy can kill off access to vaccines and make millions of dollars while he does it. Kids might die, but Robert Kennedy can keep cashing In Senator, I support vaccines.

**01:58:12**

I support the childhood schedule. I will do that.

**01:58:16**

The only thing I want is good science and that's it. How about then say you won't make money off what you do as Secretary of hhs? Before we go to Senator Tillis, I think it would be important for me to make it very clear that Mr. Kennedy has gone through the same Office of Government Ethics process as every single other nominee in the Finance Committee this year and in previous administrations.

**01:58:42**

In addition to listing his assets, including items that you've identified, he has signed an ethics letter that has been reviewed by the Office of Government Ethics concerning any possible conflict in light of its functions and the nominee's proposed duties.

**01:58:58**

And we have a letter from the Office of Government Ethics that he has complied completely with all applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest. Mr.

Chairman, point of information here. Have we had a single nominee come through who's made two and a half million dollars off suing one of the entities that it would be regulating and plans to keep getting a take of every lawsuit in the future?

**01:59:29**

Have we had that before?

**01:59:30**

I haven't reviewed the past documentation of every other nominee's financial interests. And so, no. But I know that every single time we get a nominee, their financial interests are. Are attacked. That's why we have the Office of Government Ethics.

**01:59:44**

That's why they've reviewed everything that's in his record, and that's why he has even. I think, and I don't know that I want to ask him to get into it, but he has listed his assets and has gone through a discussion of the responsibilities under the. Our ethics laws and has complied with all of those requirements.

**02:00:06**

Senator tillis. Thank you, Mr.

**02:00:09**

Chairman. Mr. Kennedy, how's your morning going? So far so good. You came prepared.

**02:00:16**

I'm glad that you did.

**02:00:20**

You, I believe, addressed to my satisfaction a question about Title 10 and the President's priority with respect to Planned Parenthood. Can you just affirm that you are 100% behind the President's policy on Title 10 and the implant? I'm 100% behind it. Thank you. You know, it's amazing to me that people.

**02:00:43**

Well, first off, you need to understand, I was in a judiciary hearing this morning. It's very clear to me that some of these nominations are going to be shirts and skins. So no matter what you answer under the affirmative, they're going to ask you one more question so that you won't be able to answer in the affirmative.

That's just the way the game gets played. When we have Nominees like yourself.

**02:01:04**

So I think you're handling yourself well. I got a real quick question for you. Are you a conspiracy theorist?

**02:01:12**

That is a pejorative, Senator. That's applied to me mainly to keep me from asking difficult questions of powerful interest. I was told that I was a conspiracy theorist. That label was applied to me because I said that the vaccines, the COVID vaccine didn't prevent transmission and it wouldn't prevent infection. When the government was telling people, Americans that it would.

**02:01:40**

I was saying that because I was looking at the monkey studies. In May of 2020, I was called a conspiracy. Now everybody admits it. I was called a conspiracy theorist because I said red dye caused cancer and now FDA has acknowledged that and banned it. I was called a conspiracy theorist because I said fluoride lowered IQ.

**02:02:02**

Last week, JAMA published a meta review of 87 studies saying that there's a direct inverse correlation between IQ loss. All right, so I'm going to assume I could go on for about a week. Is there any one of them that you can say, you got me. That really was a conspiracy theory. Are you in a possession to submit for the record?

**02:02:22**

I think it'd just be helpful for every one of these narratives for you to submit that maybe for the record. You said something about SNAP lunch. I was in the state house in North Carolina before I came here, and anytime I'd go visit an elementary school, the first thing I would do is go to the trash cans in the cafeteria.

**02:02:40**

And what we have now are kids that are not eating the food because the dictates of the federal government have made it something that they don't want. But they say, well, it's a healthy alternative.

**02:02:51**

It has processed materials in it and it's not particularly attractive to them. So they throw it away. Trash cans full of food that these kids didn't eat. So then what do they do? They go

eat snacks or they go eat a.

**02:03:03**

Or they drink a sugar drink. The SNAP program, Everything you've said about the SNAP program, I agree with. I think that we should be very, very strict about that, and it's going to make some people uncomfortable. In the food manufacturing segment, produce healthy foods that we can put in the SNAP program. That's the way to address it.

**02:03:20**

But we also need to look at the school health program. I was PTA President 21, 22 years ago at my daughter's high school, and I feel like we've got these kids that need help. We've got to guide them through a process. Many of them are probably on Medicaid and Medicaid's felon. Everybody here says Medicaid is sacrosanct.

**02:03:44**

Nobody's admitted that Medicaid is not producing positive health outcomes. Is that your problem? Medicaid right now and the program or the outcomes is the outcomes. We're spending \$900 billion. Our people are getting sicker every single year.

**02:03:58**

Yeah. So anybody. President Trump wants people to have Americans to have high quality insurance, anybody who's building a case for the status quo of Medicaid is by extension saying that they're happy with the outcomes. I think it's unacceptable. I do have a question for you.

**02:04:13**

On Project Warp Speed, we supported the CARES Act. We had 97 people in the US Senate vote for it. Everybody here. There's only one member of Congress that voted against it, I believe. And Project Warp Speed had cdc, fda, NIH and Barda very much in the mix.

**02:04:29**

Now, some people think that you're going to come in here and insert yourself into those agencies in a way that's never been done before before. Let's say that they're a part of a future Project Warp Speed. Is it your intent to go in and do something that's never been done before based on my staff's research and insert yourself in a discussion that the scientists are dealing with in those different agencies?

**02:04:53**

No, Senator. What I want to do is I'm not a scientist.



I want to empower scientists. I want to make sure that science is unobstructed by vested or economic interests. That's good iPad culture. And I'll just say about operational Warp speed. It was an extraordinary accomplishment, demonstration of leadership by President Trump when he promoted Operation Warp Speed.

**02:05:20**

He was looking at all of the different remedies, including vaccines, therapeutics, every therapeutic, Ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine, femtinavine, even chlorine dioxide. And he was not looking at shutting down our country for the year, forcing people to wear masks for a year, forcing all social distancing that did not have any scientific basis, which Dr. Fauci has now acknowledged.

**02:05:45**

He said we took it out of thin air.

**02:05:51**

But all of those changed during the Biden administration and it became very narrowly focused. We ended up with the worst, the highest death count of any country in the world. Mr. Chair, if I can just ask one final question, and I think it's a one word answer. I've heard a lot of people complaining about health care delivery.

**02:06:09**

Medicaid on the other side of the dais here, who's been responsible for health care policies over the last four years. The Biden, I mean, the President. The Biden. Okay, so that I'd like to have heard more of those in oversight hearings over the last four years. I haven't, but I'm glad that there's an acknowledgement that you're inheriting a problem that needs to be fixed.

**02:06:34**

Thank you. Thank you, Senator. Senator Sanders, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.

**02:06:40**

Kennedy, thanks for being with us. I very much like the slogan that you coined, make America healthy again. And I strongly agree with that effort. Despite spending, as you indicated, two or three times as much per capita on health care as other nations, we have 85 million people who are uninsured, underinsured, we have all kinds of chronic illnesses, our life expectancy is lower than other countries.

**02:07:11**

And for working class people in this country, they are living six, seven years shorter lives than the top 1%.

**02:07:18**

We got a problem. Okay. And I'm going to suggest some ideas that I think can remedy that. Last year, the insurance industry in this country made over \$70 billion, while at the same time 85 million Americans, uninsured or underinsured. Do you agree with me that the United States should join every other major country on earth and guarantee health care to all people as a human right?

**02:07:48**

Yes. No, Senator, I would say. Senator, I can't give you a yes or no answer to that question. Health care, a human right. Is health care a human right in the way that free speech is a human right?

**02:08:05**

I would say it's different because with free speech doesn't cost anybody anything. But in health care, if you smoke cigarettes for 20 years and you get cancer, you are now taking from the pool and so are you guaranteed the same right there also. I'm sorry, I'd love to talk for an hour with you.

**02:08:30**

We got a few minutes left here. All right.

**02:08:34**

Every other country on earth says healthcare, whether you're poor or rich, younger, old, to human rights. I'm not hearing you say that. All right, you've talked about the drug companies and maybe we agree on this one. As you all know, despite the drug companies making over 100 billion in profits, paying CEOs outrageous compensation packages, we in some cases pay 10 times more for the same drug.

**02:08:56**

Will you support legislation that I will introduce which says that in America we should not be paying a nickel more for prescription drugs than people around the rest of the world?

**02:09:06**

Yes. No, to equalize it. Not to equalize it, that we should not be paying more than other countries for the same damn drug. President Trump has asked me, in fact, I had a Meeting with President Trump a week ago where we showed him the charts. He knows the charts.

We're paying 10 times more from Europe. That's right. And are you going to commit to us that you will end that absurdity? I think in principle, we can. We should end that disparity.

**02:09:40**

Good. Okay. That's great. All right. I happen to believe that climate change is real.

**02:09:47**

It's an existential threat, and it is a health care issue. Donald Trump thinks that it is a hoax originating in China. Question. Is, in your judgment, is climate change a hoax or is it real, causing devastating problems? President Trump and I, from the beginning, from our first meeting, agreed to disagree on that issue.

**02:10:11**

I believe climate change is existential. My job is to make Americans healthy again. You believe that. You disagree with Trump. You don't think climate change is a hoax is what I'm hearing.

**02:10:24**

My job here is to. I'll just ask you, Kenny, not a trick question. I answered your question, Senator Sanders. Okay. You disagree with the president on that?

**02:10:31**

I answered your question. Okay. I want to pick up on a point that Senator Hassan made. Look, there is no question that abortion is a divisive issue in this country. I would say a majority of the people are pro choice.

**02:10:46**

There's a strong minority who are pro life. A year and a half ago, you went to New Hampshire running for president, gave a speech, and you talked about government should not tell a woman what she can do with her own body. That's her choice. Now, I think everybody on that side is pro life.

**02:11:08**

I think everybody here is pro choice.

**02:11:10**

I have never seen any major politician flip on that issue quite as quickly as you did when Trump asked you to become HHS secretary. Tell me why you think people should have

confidence in your consistency and in your word when you really made a major U turn on an issue of that importance in such a short time.

**02:11:37**

Senator, I believe, and I've always believed, that every abortion is a tragedy. But you told the people in New Hampshire that it was their right. All right, let me do a last question here, because I'm running out of time.

**02:11:51**

I think the gist of what you are trying to say today is you're really pro vaccine. You want to ask questions. You have started a group called the Children's Health Defense. You're the originator. Right now, as I understand it, on their website, they are selling what's called onesies.

**02:12:10**

These are little things, clothing for babies. One of them is titled Unfaxed Unafraid. Next one. And they're sold for 26 bucks a piece, by the way. Next one is no vax.

**02:12:24**

No problem. Now you're coming before this committee and you say you're pro vaccine. Just want to ask some questions. And yet your organization is making money selling a child's product to parents for 26 bucks, which casts fundamental doubt on the usefulness of vaccines. Can you tell us now that you will, now that you are pro vaccine, that you're going to have your organization take these products off the market?

**02:12:54**

Senator, I have no power over that organization. I'm not part of it. I resign from the board. Yeah, it was just a few months ago you founded that. You certainly have power.

**02:13:03**

You can make that. Are you supportive of this? I've had nothing to do with. Are you supportive of these onesies? I'm supportive of vaccines.

**02:13:11**

Are you supportive of this clothing which is militantly anti vaccine? I am supportive of vaccines. I want good science and I want to protect. But you will not tell the organization you founded nothing to continue selling that product. Thank you, Mr.

Chairman. Senator Blackburn, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you so much for being with us today. And I have no doubt that you will be confirmed and you are going to do such a solid job for the people of this country.

**02:13:49**

And I do have several emails I wanted to talk with you about and didn't have time to cover them all when we met prior to the meeting. But rural health care is very important to me and the people of Tennessee. 78 of our 95 counties are rural counties. Now, over the last few years we've seen hospital closures, so we have focused on access in rural areas.

**02:14:16**

And my rural health agenda, which is bipartisan, focuses on innovation, telehealth, access points.

**02:14:23**

It focuses on work shortages. And also Senator Warner and I have together focused on making certain that we address the area wage index and do that fairly for our citizens that are in rural communities. So I would like a commitment from you that when confirmed, you and your CMS administrator will work with us to make certain that the area wage index is balanced and that it is fair to rural areas.

**02:14:59**

Senator, both Dr. Oz and myself recognize that rural health care is in crisis in this country and that is catastrophic for our entire country.

**02:15:10**

And I talked a little bit about my commitment to rural health earlier in this hearing. The regional price points, as you know, are set by Congress and not by HHS. I will certainly, and I know Dr. Oz will certainly work with you to make them sensible. We look forward to that.

**02:15:34**

Also, you and I, before you came forward as the secretary, the nominee, we had talked in years past about over medicating youth and concerns over that. And I was looking at a report from TennCare, which is our Medicaid program in Tennessee. And I was concerned when I saw a number that TennCare had spent \$90 million 2024 in alone on ADHD.

**02:16:04**

This was 417,000 of our children. And \$90 million.

To me, that is heartbreaking, what is happening there. So how will you prioritize oversight of prescribing practices while promoting alternative solutions such as counseling, behavioral therapies, community based interventions for our youth? Exactly. And that's the solution. 15% of American youth are now on Adderall or some other ADHD medication.

**02:16:44**

Even higher percentages are on SSRIs and benzos. We are not just medicating our children, we're over medicating our entire population. Half the pharmaceutical drugs on Earth are now sold here. 70% of the profits from pharmaceutical companies are from the United States, even though we only have four of the world's population. Not only that, but a recent study by Cochrane Collaboration founder Peter Ghosh found that pharmaceutical drugs are the third largest cause of death in our country after heart attacks and cancers.

**02:17:22**

They're not making us healthier. We need community health initiatives. We need access to treatment. We need exercise. We need better food.

**02:17:32**

Okay, let me talk to you about one of those access points in treatment. And this highlights a problem we have in the federal Medicaid law. Since Medicaid's enactment, states have been prohibited from using Medicaid funds for care provided by institutions for mental disease. We refer to them as IMDs. These are psychiatric hospitals, residential treatment facilities with more than 16 beds.

**02:17:59**

This is a discriminatory exclusion, and it denies payment for medically necessary care based on the illness that is being treated. And it has perpetuated unequal coverage in mental health care. So if you're confirmed, when you're confirmed, will you commit to working with me on repealing this discriminatory exclusion and ensuring equal access to mental health care for Medicaid beneficiaries?

**02:18:31**

Yes, Senator. Thank you so much.

**02:18:34**

I've got a question on PBM reform 1 on artificial intelligence in health care. In the interest of time, I will yield back. I look forward to seeing you help make us healthy again. Thank you, Senator.

I think it's Senator Lujan. What? No, you're next. I'm next. Excuse me.

**02:19:04**

Just. I made a mistake. It's Senator Cantwell. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr.

**02:19:11**

Chairman. And. And just congratulations on your nomination, Mr. Kennedy. And I've been absent only because I've been in another hearing with the nominee to be the Commerce Secretary.

**02:19:23**

So I will review everything that you've said today and look at that diligently. But one of the things that I wanted to discuss with you is I represent a very big innovation state and innovation in health care, specifically innovation like NIH funding to the Fred Hutch Cancer center that helped develop the HPV vaccine which has the potential to eliminate over 95% of cervical cancer.

**02:19:49**

NIH also funds a lot of jobs and grants, nearly 11,000 people in the state of Washington and over \$1.2 billion worth of grants. So while I agree with you on healthy foods, I definitely am troubled by the medical research side of innovation and some of the things that you have said. In fact, this issue about laying off 600 employees at NIH or giving the fact that to, quote, give infectious disease a break for eight years.

**02:20:23**

So I, we've had a chance to talk about this a little bit. But the most striking example of this is when Covid hit and we were the first in the nation, we had the first case and it really was the fast response by the University of Washington that really helped save lives. So I just want to know that are you aware of how harmful these issues could be for public health?

**02:20:53**

That public health in and of itself could be affected by these kind of anti science views? Senator, I have always been a science person, a pro science person.

**02:21:06**

I believe in evidence based medicine and gold standard science. And I've explained this before. You came in at 600 people out of a population, out of a workforce of 91,000 is pretty typical. Last year alone, President Biden replaced 3,000 people at HHS and 700 at NIH. I want to say this.

I said give infectious disease a break because that's been the principal preoccupation. Infectious disease, chronic disease is 92%, accounts for 92% of deaths in this country. And almost nothing is studied at NIH about the ideology of our chronic disease epidemic. But right now the money is going to infectious disease. I get your point.

**02:21:57**

It's an interesting point. The problem is we had to respond. And it's actually the Gates foundation and a flu cohort that figured out what was wrong and that we had an outbreak of COVID that was going beyond the very first case. And so we had to build a very fast response. So I take this too.

**02:22:17**

The University of Washington has conducted groundbreaking stem cell research on fetal tissue. To me, I know there's probably a lot of people that may not Agree with this, but we're making regenerative heart tissue now at the University of Washington. So yes or no, do you commit to protecting stem cell research for scientific agencies?

**02:22:36**

If confirmed, I will protect stem cell research. Stem cell research today can be done on umbilical cords and you don't need fetal tissue.

**02:22:50**

You'll protect the laws that are on the books today and the research that's done. My job is, Senator, to enforce the laws. Okay, so I want to move to PBMs because PBMs are driving up drug prices. And one of the biggest things that we need to do here, I think, in a new administration is get a handle on everything that is driving up prices and lower them.

**02:23:10**

The report found that PBMs generated \$1.4 billion from spread pricing.

**02:23:16**

That is where they are able to basically set the price, not reimburse pharmacies, and then pocket the rest. We've had bipartisan legislation in several different committees now to get at this. What do you think the solution is? I think one of the really notable achievements of this panel was the PBM legislation that they put together in a bipartisan way.

**02:23:43**

I haven't met a single senator.



Well, actually one only. But of the 60 odd senators that I talked to, all of them talked about PBMs and how important it was and work. President Trump during his first administration pushed through a law or pushed a law to give transparency to PBMs. It got overruled during the Biden administration. Luckily, this panel is resuscitating that President Trump is absolutely committed to fixing the PBMs.

**02:24:15**

My time is running out, so I just want to clarify. You believe that we should pass these laws that now have been proposed in the Senate? I haven't read the entire law, so I don't know. But I think that we need to reform the PBMs. I think we need to get rid of all of these vested interests that are draining money from the system.

**02:24:34**

Okay. Somebody suggested though, that you thought we should, you should convene the PBMs and talk to them about some sort of self regulation. So I am trying to distinguish between these people who basically are doing illegal activities and ripping off. Really, they're creating pharmacy deserts in my state. So I'm asking you whether you believe that we have to legislate in this area.

**02:24:57**

Again, I'm not being evasive. I just don't know exactly what the law says. I met with the PBMs. I met with PhRMA. My job is to meet with all the stakeholders.

**02:25:08**

I've been meeting with stakeholders for 40 years. People I was suing. People I was. You want to hear from the other side? That doesn't mean I would let the PBMs write their own ticket.

**02:25:22**

I support the efforts of this committee to come up with bipartisan legislation. President Trump wants to get the excess profits away from the pbms and send it back to primary care, to patients in this country, to high quality health care. I'll ask you for the record, since my time's expired, to look at the legislation that came out of the Commerce Committee that defines the legal activities that they are doing to drive up prices and get us an answer for the record.

**02:25:48**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In principle, I support that legislation. Thank you. And let me just tell you the list as we have to move forward to the ending here. Senator Lujan will be next, followed by Senator Marshall, Senator Warnock, Senator Smith, Senator Young, and Senator Welch. And let me say again, Mr.

**02:26:11**

Chairman, this is a matter of such importance, a number of my colleagues would like a second round, and I think it would be important to offer, say, a modest amount of additional time to get into this on both sides. I know. I have some questions. I want my colleagues to have the opportunity to raise their concerns as well.

**02:26:33**

Well, I've said, as I have indicated to you, Senator Wyden, I'm not going to do a second round.

**02:26:38**

I have been very generous with the senators. I think almost every single senator has had seven minutes at least. And I will give you a second, as is our practice, between the two of us. I'll then divide my time up with my colleagues. Okay, you are welcome to do that.

**02:26:55**

Thank you, Senator Lujan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Kennedy, when we met, you stated to me that it is not your goal to take away programs that work for Americans.

**02:27:09**

Do you stand by that statement? Yes, Senator. Mr. Kennedy, do you know how many Americans rely on Medicaid?

**02:27:20**

About 72 million. Plus the 7 million kids are on chips. Appreciate that. 72 million. Yes or no, is it important that expectant mothers and newborns have access to health coverage?

**02:27:35**

Is it important that expectant mothers and newborns have access to health coverage? Absolutely, Senator. Mr. Kennedy, do you know how many babies born in this country are covered through Medicaid?

**02:27:50**

I would guess. I don't know the answer. I would guess about 30 million. I have it, Mr. Kennedy.

**02:28:00**

About 41% of 1.4 million babies births are financed by Medicaid, according to the national center for Health Statistics. Yes or no, do you believe that Medicaid is a critical program? I believe that that Medicaid is a critical program, but that it's not working as well as it ought to be. And President Trump has asked me to make it work better that most Americans are not happy with it.

**02:28:32**

The premiums are too high, the deductibles are too high and everybody's getting sicker.

**02:28:38**

Too much money is going to the insurance industry. I have a series of yes or no questions. They're pretty simple because you heard we're not going to get a second round of questions. I ask for your indulgence to be able to get to them yes or no. In New Mexico, as you know, Medicaid is often measured state by state.

**02:28:58**

It might surprise you if you look at some of those surveys. In New Mexico, the response was 90% of New Mexicans on Medicaid report satisfaction. Getting care 80% getting specialist care, 85% getting urgent care, 95% ease of filings, out of focus. Not to pick on any one of my colleagues. But in Louisiana, 86% of people on Medicaid are satisfied with their interactions.

**02:29:19**

83% are satisfied getting care, 85% are satisfied getting specialized care, 82% getting urgent care. I can go on state by state, but we don't have the time today. Yes or no, do you support cutting Medicaid or reducing? And especially in an area where you and I spoke about with the federal investment in Medicaid, which is known as fmap.

**02:29:41**

I'm going to call it a restroom break.

**02:29:43**

President Trump has not told me that he wants cut Medicaid. He's told me to make it better.

Do you support cutting yes or no? Let me ask you this way, since you're. It's only about President I support making it better. Senator, if President Trump asks you to cut Medicaid, will you do it? Oh, it's not up to me to cut Medicaid.

**02:30:04**

It would be up to Congress.

**02:30:10**

Mr. Kennedy, you don't want to answer? I'll move on. Do you know how many states will end. Mr.

**02:30:16**

Chairman, if I may pause my time. So I understand that people are getting asked to leave if they stand up with signs. But there's a lot of other as well, Mr. Chairman. So it needs to be extended to everyone.

**02:30:27**

As Mr. Kennedy said, we should respect each other when we have a difference of opinion. We're just trying to do our jobs here and trying to ask questions, that's all. And that's all I'm doing to Mr. Kennedy, folks.

**02:30:37**

So, Senator Lujan, you are right and I asked the audience to please be respectful. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that very much. Mr. Kennedy, do you know how many states will end their Medicaid expansion if the federal share of Medicaid drops?

**02:30:53**

Well, there's 40 states that have signed onto the expansion. So, you know, it's a smaller number. So it's nine states would quickly have to end their expansion because of the laws that they have. That's about 4 million folks across the country. And in New Mexico, Iowa and Idaho, they have triggers that it would immediately have to go into effect if in fact that gets cut.

**02:31:19**

The reason I'm asking those questions is there's been a lot of chatter and conversations around Medicaid. Now I agree we can always do better and we must be doing better in America. But Medicaid has been shown to improve health outcomes, including mortality, quality of life and access to preventative care as well. And there's some areas, Mr.

Kennedy, that you and I touched on specific to Native American communities.

**02:31:47**

One of the concerns that I have are these, these programs matter to folks. You shared your passion about caring for folks. I believed that passion. My question in this area is, as you know, when folks are doing research and they're going to check to see if medicine works on someone, if they're not included in that trial, it often doesn't help them.

**02:32:11**

That's what all the evidence shows.

**02:32:14**

So what are you going to do when programs are eliminated to require the inclusion of Native Americans in clinical trials? When it comes to life saving medicine, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that there's Native Americans in clinical trials. As I said to you when I visit your office, I spent 20% of my career working on Native issues.

**02:32:43**

My family's been deeply involved with them. My family, father and uncle were very big critics of the Indian Health Service.

**02:32:49**

Failure to deliver good health results or health care on the reservations. I'm going to bring a Native in for the first time in history into my central office that all the major decisions in my office will be that he will have it. He already interviewed candidate, a very, very good candidate will have direct impact on all the major offices.

**02:33:17**

One of my priorities is to, you know, I appreciate that I have a follow up in that space. Specifically, will you commit to finalizing the congressionally mandated FDA guidance to increase clinical trial diversity?

**02:33:31**

Just repeat that again. I'm sorry. Will you commit to finalizing the congressionally mandated FDA guidance to increasing clinical trial diversity? Yes, I appreciate that. Will you commit to reinstating all of the pages that were eliminated and people that were fired from this administration that have this responsibility.

I cannot commit to that because I don't even know who they are. I'll commit to working with you to make sure those positions are adequately staffed. I will follow up in writing in those specific areas because I think there's some commonality here, but answers matter. And so I'd like to get those as timely as possible.

**02:34:12**

The last thing, Mr.

**02:34:13**

Chairman, that I'll say is one of the conversations I had last before this hearing was with a family that I've been working with to work with my Republican colleagues when it comes to autism and federal programs and making a difference in these families lives, in this little girl's life. What I'm asking now, Mr.

**02:34:34**

Chairman, is unanimous consent to enter into the record an article from Autism Speaks titled, quote, do vaccines cause autism? End quote. And I'll note that the first sentence states, quote, vaccines do not cause autism, end quote.

**02:34:51**

Thank you. I yield back without objection. And before we move on, we've had a request from several quarters for a quick restroom break. We will take a five minute recess. I'm sorry to those remaining five or six senators who must wait a few minutes, but we will have a quick break.

**02:35:09**

We will be back as soon as we can it.

**02:36:36**

And lawmakers calling for a break in the confirmation hearing for President Trump's Health and Human Services secretary nominee Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. The first of two appearances he'll be making this week before senators. Tomorrow he'll be before the Senate help committee. At 10am Eastern.

**02:36:51**

We'll have coverage on our app, C SPAN now, and c span.org we'll bring you back live to today's hearing when it resumes. Also, later this afternoon at 2:30 Eastern, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell will hold a press conference to provide an update on interest rates and monetary policy. We'll have that live on C Span on the free C Span now video app and

online@cspan.org it's it.

**02:39:45**

It's the. Would everyone please take your seats?

**02:40:40**

This committee will continue and come out of recess and go back into session. Before we go to you, Senator Marshall, I'd like to just tell everybody the remaining list, Senator Marshall, Senator Warnock, Senator Smith, Senator Young, and Senator Welch. And then I did indicate earlier that I would give another five minutes to Senator Wyden.

**02:41:00**

I understand he has distributed that five minutes to a few of the other senators. So we will have a few more quick questions and then we will proceed.

**02:41:08**

And I would like to thank the audience again. I know we had a couple of outbursts earlier. But I want to thank the audience for being respectful and encourage the audience to continue to be respectful as we conclude the hearing. With that, Senator Marshall. Thank you, Chairman.

**02:41:26**

Obesity, diabetes, heart disease. Obesity, diabetes, heart disease account for probably 80% of health challenges in America. You know, many times I heard my friends across the aisle mention any three of those. I don't know if we've lost the force for the trees here. Vaccine is a critical issue.

**02:41:49**

I understand that. I don't see how Mr. Kennedy's position could be any more clear that he's going to support the vaccines, he's going to support the science and empowerment to parents and their doctors to make these choices. 60% of Americans have a chronic disease, that there's an epidemic of chronic diseases across the country.

**02:42:12**

And this Make America Healthy Again movement is palpable.

**02:42:15**

To me. It started on the campaign trail in 2020 when moms I'd never met, that never

involved in the political process came up to me and said, look, I want to make these choices about my children with my doctor, not the federal government. That it's a very real thing. Moms, dads, grandparents across the country grab me and say, look, why do 20% of our children now?

**02:42:39**

Why are they on a prescription drug?

**02:42:42**

So, Mr. Kennedy, what is your prescription to help make America healthy again? What's your vision? What does that look like to you?

**02:42:54**

Thank you, Senator Marshall.

**02:42:59**

We're having epidemics of all these chronic illnesses. Autoimmune diseases, neurological diseases, allergic diseases, obesity. When my uncle was president, 3% of Americans were obese. Today, 74% of Americans are overbeast or overweight. No other country has anything like this.

**02:43:24**

In Japan, the obesity rate is still 3%. Epidemics are not caused by genes. Genes may provide the vulnerability, but you need an environmental toxin. Something is poisoning the American people. And we know that.

**02:43:43**

The primary culprits our changing food supply, the switch to highly chemical intensive processed foods. We have 10,000 ingredients in our country in our foods. Europeans have only 400. If you buy McDonald's french fries in our country, there's 11 ingredients. My understanding in Europe, there's only three.

**02:44:09**

If you buy Fruit Loops in our country, they're loaded with food ties with yellow dye, red dye, blue dye, and many other ingredients. The same company makes the same product with different ingredients for Canada and Europe. At age, we don't have good science on all these things. And that is deliberate. That's a deliberate choice.



Not to study the things that are truly making us sick, that are not only contributing to chronic disease, but to mortalities from infectious disease. We need to get a handle on this because if we don't, it's an existential threat. Our country is not going to be destroyed because we get the marginal tax rate wrong or because we get one of these culture war issues that we've been talking about today wrong.

**02:44:58**

It's going to be destroyed if we continue down this trajectory of chronic disease. We need to fix our food supply and that's the number one.

**02:45:07**

Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. Certainly I share your concern with ultra processed foods. On the other end of this food chain are my farmers and ranchers back home. Would you just take a second and share your compassion, how you feel about farmers and ranchers, that they respond to the market?

**02:45:24**

They don't dictate the market, they grow what the market is wanting them to grow. And Senator Hawley told me the other day his brother in laws are all farmers. And he said four out of every five of his brother in laws has Parkinson's disease. And that kind of cluster we're seeing across farm country of cancers, autoimmune diseases, obesity, et cetera.

**02:45:56**

And we can now not export American food to Europe because the Europeans won't take our food.

**02:46:03**

That's not good for farmers. We're also destroying our soil because some of the chemicals that farmers use destroy the microbiome and that causes the erosion of the soil. You can't get water infiltration, water pools up and it washes the soil off. Agronomists now estimate that we only have, if we continue doing these processes, only 60 harvests left before our soil is gone.

**02:46:32**

Farmers are using seeds and chemicals that are over the long term are costing them and us.

**02:46:45**

And what we need to do is we need to support the farmers, we need the farmers as

partners if we're going to make them work. And I don't want a single farmer to go out of business under our watch. I don't regulate farm, if I'm privileged to be confirmed not regulating farms, that's under usda.

**02:47:07**

But I want to partner with all of my decisions with USDA and with the farmer farm community to make sure that we don't lose more farmers in this country. We also transition, we offer and incentivize transitions to regenerative agriculture, to no till agriculture and to less chemically intensive.

**02:47:32**

And by the way, I've also met with the chemical industry and the fertilizer and herbicide companies and they want to do the same thing. I think we're on the trajectory to do that and we need to incentivize initiatives to accelerate that trajectory. Mr. Chairman, if I could. You know, the great news is that my farmers in Kansas are selling products to Europe that today's regenerative practices, soil health, all those things are priorities for Kansas farmers.

**02:48:06**

We are. Many of us are doing many of those things already. We just need it to be more widespread. If I could just wrap up my remarks, though. Is that, again, going back to the big picture here.

**02:48:16**

60% of Americans have a chronic disease. Mr. Kennedy, I believe for such a time as this that you're not just one of 300 million people. I think that you are the person to lead HHS to make America healthy again, that God has a divine purpose for you. And I look forward to your confirmation in working with you to make America healthy again.

**02:48:36**

Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senator. Senator Warnock, thank you so much. Chairman Crapo and Ranking Member Wyden, it's great to be here. Mr.

**02:48:48**

Kennedy, welcome. Welcome to you and to your family. Thank you for meeting with me a few days ago. I'd like to follow up, if I might, with some of the issues that we discussed in my office. I want to talk to you first about the CDC or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I'm proud of the work that the CDC does, proud that it's located in Georgia, with more than 10,000 employees in my state. If confirmed, you would be the cabinet secretary over. The CDC representing HHS is about 29% of the federal budget. CDC is a part of that. Do you agree that the CDC's work is critical to Georgia, critical for our country and the health of the entire world?

**02:49:45**

Yes, Senator. Senator Isakson, my Republican predecessor, would have agreed with that, bless his memory. He was a fierce advocate for the cdc, as am I. The CDC is an agency filled with hardworking, dedicated public health servants. They wake up every single day working to keep us safe.

**02:50:11**

I think we don't think often enough about their work because it's easy not to celebrate the folks who are protecting you from that which doesn't appear because of the work that they're doing. So grateful for the work that the CDC employees do. Some of them are members of my church. I saw that deep commitment firsthand when I visited the CDC just last summer.

**02:50:33**

Mr.

**02:50:33**

Kennedy, you have compared the CDC's work to Nazi death camps. You've compared it to sexual abusers in the Catholic Church. You've also said that many of them belong. This is a direct quote. Many of them belong in jail.

**02:50:54**

For me, those are disturbing characterizations of the cdc Workers that I know who are trying to keep the American public safe every single day. And as you are presented as the nominee for this position, I need to know, do you stand by those statements that you made in the past or do you retract those previous statements?

**02:51:18**

Senator, I don't believe that I ever compared the CDC to Nazi death camps. I support the cdc. My job is not to dismantle or harm the cdc.

**02:51:31**

My job is to empower the scientists if I'm privileged to be confirmed. So you retract those

statements. I'm not retracting it. I never said it. Well, actually I have a transcript of me saying that it's a Nazi death camp.

**02:51:45**

Let me read your words. Says that the institution CDC and the vaccine program is your description of their work is more important than the children that it's supposed to protect. And you know, it's the same reason we had a pedophile scandal in the Catholic Church. It's because people were able to convince themselves that the institution of the church was more important than these little boys and girls who were being raped.

**02:52:10**

That's pretty provocative language.

**02:52:12**

You said in another statement to me this is like Nazi death camp. Let me finish. I'm just reading your words. I mean what happens, what happened to these kids? 1 in 31 boys in this country, their minds are being robbed from them.

**02:52:31**

Yeah. I was not comparing the CDC to Nazi death camps. I was comparing the injury rate to our children to other atrocities. And I wouldn't compare of course the CDC to Nazi Nazi defendants. To the extent at any statement that I made has been interpreted that way.

**02:52:54**

Yeah, I don't agree with that. In 2003, United States Congress Government Oversight Committee ended an over a year investigation the CDC and used almost that same language. They said that the CDC, just one Division 1 branch immunization safety office had put institutional self interest and pharmaceutical profits ahead of the welfare and health of American children.

**02:53:31**

So that was a conclusion by Congress. And I repeated that.

**02:53:36**

I'm asking you because you're the nominee for hhs. It sounds like you stand by those statements. Senator, my objective is to support cdc. There's nothing I'm going to do that is going to harm cdc. I want to make sure that our science is gold standard science and it's free from that same government oversight investigation committee at the panels, the ACIP Panel and within CDC.

I think 97% of the people on it had conflicts. I don't believe that that's right. I think we need to end those conflicts and make sure that Scientists are doing unobstructed science. So I want to enter this statement, by the way, into the record. Without objection.

**02:54:19**

Without objection. Last week, the White House gagged HHS and the cdc, preventing them from communicating all important public health information to anyone, including all of our allies, including our allies in the United States and global disease prevention. Can you just answer yes or no because I'm running out of time. Do you agree with that action?

**02:54:41**

I was not consulted on it, but that's pretty much standard operating procedure for incoming administration.

**02:54:47**

So you agree with the action that gagged HHS and CDC from communicating important public health information. That directive made sure that. No. You said public health and only nonessential travel and mass communications were temporarily suspended pending the confirmation of a new HHS secretary. This is standard operating procedure for administration.

**02:55:17**

I get it. I don't think what we've seen over the last several days is standard operation for new administration. I think we're seeing some unprecedented actions. But you agree with it. Last night, members of the cdc, along with other federal employees, were actually invited to resign these buyouts.

**02:55:40**

And I got text messages and folks I know work for the CDC that do this important work. Who got that note? And it's really important because my experience is that when you send out that kind of note, the folks who resign are the folks who you least likely want to see resign. They got other options.

**02:55:59**

They're gifted folks.

**02:56:00**

They got a lot of expertise. They have options. A lot of them are doing this work because of their patriotism, because of their commitment. Do you agree with the buyouts that were

presented to CDC employees just last night? I agree.

**02:56:16**

At the vast majority of the scientists and experts at CDC are patriots of good government servants. I. Can you tell me? Yes. I don't think anybody's going to resign.

**02:56:27**

Who's committed to making America healthy. Can you just answer? Yes. Okay. You agree with the buyouts?

**02:56:32**

In our meeting, I asked you to confirm your support for the Affordable Care Act. You also mentioned that you and President Trump want to fix the ACA by making premiums more affordable. Can you answer me yes or no, as I don't have a lot of time.

**02:56:52**

Did you know that tax credits that help families afford health insurance and save Georgia's an average of \$531 per month per person are set to expire at the end of the year? Did you know that? I do. We need to move on. Do you support Congress extending these tax credits so that Americans can continue to afford health care?

**02:57:17**

You know, Congress has to make its own decisions about that, my instructions from. You're saying I'm having a lot of trouble getting the witness to answer yes or no to a yes or no question. Well, I've got one more question. You're almost at nine minutes. Well, I need him to answer yes or no.

**02:57:38**

Yes or no? I'm not going to answer yes or no to a question that's not susceptible to an honest yes or no answer. We need to move on. I think that the fact that you find it difficult to answer basic questions is deeply troubling for me as you present yourself as a nominee to run hhs.

**02:58:00**

Thank you so very much, Senator Snapp.

**02:58:01**

I've been in courts all over the country and Mr. Chairman, you told me I'm out of time. And

this continues to filibuster even after I said I'm done. Senator Smith. Mr.

**02:58:12**

Chair. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair and ranking member. And welcome, Mr.

**02:58:17**

Kennedy. So, Mr. Kennedy, I don't have a question for you on abortion. I think that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have covered this. But I want to say I can respect people who have different views than mine on this issue.

**02:58:31**

But it's hard for me to respect people who won't give a straight answer to what they think on this issue. In particular, Mr. Chair, I just want to note that I understand that anti choice advocates have said that in these hearings they were looking, looking to hear Mr. Kennedy provide some reassurance that he is on their side.

**02:58:46**

And I'm not hearing that.

**02:58:47**

And I think most Americans are looking for some hint that the decisions that people make about abortion should be personal and private, and they should be free to make those decisions without government interference. And I'm not hearing that either. To make it worse, the answers that you have given tell me that the Trump administration is more than willing to restrict or even ban medication abortion without a single act of Congress, and even in states where abortion is legal.

**02:59:15**

And what is clear to me is that you and President Trump are dangerous to women's access to mifepristone. So having said that, I want to move to a different topic.

**02:59:26**

Mr. Kennedy, I appreciate Senator Cornyn's questions about mental and behavioral health, something that I care a lot about. I know that you and your family have had personal experience, experience with mental health challenges, as have I. And I agree that the mental health crisis in this country is a crisis. So let me ask you, in an interview in 2023 and again in 2024, you blamed school shootings on antidepressants.

You said, and this is a quote. There is no time in American history or human history that kids were going to shoot schools and shooting their classes. It really started happening coterminous with the introduction of these drugs with Prozac and with other drugs. So do you believe, as you've said, that antidepressants cause school shootings?

**03:00:12**

This should be a simple question.

**03:00:14**

I don't think anybody can answer that question. And I didn't answer that question. I said it should be studied. So your answer is. I said it should be studied along with other potential culprits, like they may cause social media.

**03:00:27**

But I don't know. I would never make. Because there's no science on that, Senator. Well, there is, Senator. I mean, excuse me.

**03:00:33**

There is. Mr. Kennedy, thank you for the promotion. The science shows that there is no link between school shootings and antidepressants. And in fact, most school shooters were not even treated with antidepressants.

**03:00:45**

And of those that were, there was no evidence of association. You know, I don't think you. My question is, Senator, because HIPAA rules, nobody knows. Well, that is. Mr.

**03:00:55**

Kennedy, do you think that people who take antidepressants are dangerous? I think I. Listen, I'm not going into HHS if I'm privileged to be confirmed with any. So you can't say that people to impose any preconceived ideas that I may have. I just want to have good science.

**03:01:16**

So you're not saying that they aren't dangerous, which means that they could be dangerous. Let me ask you this. That's not true. You've described Americans who take mental health medications as addicts who need to be sent to wellness farms to recover. Is that what you believe?



Of course. I didn't say that anybody should be compelled to do anything. No, but you said they should be sent. I said they should be available to them. I didn't say they should be sent.

**03:01:39**

You said that folks and antidepressants are like addicts, that I can provide, that they should have the availability. Listen, I know people, including members of my family, who've had a much worse time getting off of SSRIs than they did than people have getting off of heroin. The withdrawal period is. And it's written on the label.

**03:02:03**

I have some experience myself, Mr.

**03:02:07**

Kennedy. This is personal for me. When I was a young woman and I was struggling with depression, thankfully I had the resources to help me get through it, including a new generation of SSRI uptake RE inhibitors, which help to clear my mind, get me back on track to being a mom and A wife and a productive, happy person.

**03:02:28**

And I'm really grateful for that therapy. So I have some experience with this, and I think that everyone should have access to that care.

**03:02:35**

And your job as secretary is to expand access to care, not to spread lies and misinformation. And, you know, the things that you say, Mr. Kennedy, they live on. They have impact. And, you know, we're having this conversation at the same moment that my Republican colleagues are looking to try to figure out how to save money any way they can.

**03:02:57**

And so they want to cut Medicaid. Let's just think about this for a minute, because you're going to be, should you be confirmed, you would be responsible for cms, which provides mental and behavioral health care to millions of. Of Americans. Close to 40% of folks on Medicaid have a behavioral health condition. And you would be part of this administration that would be looking to cut Medicaid.

**03:03:19**

So, Mr. Kennedy, these statements that you've made, linking antidepressants to school

shootings, they reinforce the stigma that people who experience mental health every day face every single day. And I'm very concerned. This is another example of your record of sharing false and misleading information that actually really hurts people. Are you mischaracterizing my statements?

**03:03:44**

I am only putting into the record what you have said. You're mischaracterizing my statements. And I'm happy that you had a good experience on SSRIs. Many Americans have very good experience on it. Others have not.

**03:03:59**

Be an issue between them and their physicians. And not for the future head of HHS to be putting out misinformation about the dangers of SSRIs and other antidepressant medication, spreading the stigma and the fear that we're actually trying to overcome. Do you think physicians, when they make that prescription, ought to have access to good science?

**03:04:22**

Of course they do. That's all I believe, too.

**03:04:24**

And you and I are in agreement, Senator. And to your point that you made, when you made these statements, it was not based on good science. I don't know what it was based on. I was saying the science needed to be done. I was saying these are potential culprits.

**03:04:36**

We're coterminous. And I named other things. I said video games. I said social media. I said SSRIs.

**03:04:43**

SSRIs have a black box warning, warning of suicide. Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair.

**03:04:49**

I will submit to the Chair the information that I have about what Mr. Kennedy has said, linking antidepressants to school shootings. Thank you, Senator Young. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, good to see you.

**03:05:03**

Mr. Kennedy. To follow up on that spirited exchange, in talking with you and reading about your vision for the department, you said one of your goals is to return public health agencies to the gold standard of scientific review. You've alluded to the gold standard a number of times today. So I'm going to give you an opportunity, uninterrupted, but hopefully not too extensive, to tell me and others what you mean by this gold standard.

**03:05:33**

The gold standard means real scientific research with replication of studies, which very rarely happens. Now at NIH, we should be giving at least 20% of the NIH budgets to replication. We should make sure that all the science is published with the raw data. We should make sure that the peer reviews are also published.

**03:06:00**

And I'll give you a quick example.

**03:06:02**

Twenty years ago, NIH scientists did a study on amyloid on Alzheimer's which they said it was caused by amyloid plaque. After that, NIH shut down studies of any other hypothesis. Twenty years later, we now know that those studies were fraudulent. NIH has funded 800 studies on a fraudulent hypothesis and we've lost 20 years in figuring out how to a cure for Alzheimer's.

**03:06:32**

And that's just one example.

**03:06:33**

I could give you hundreds. We need to end that. We need to end the old boy system. We need to have replicatable science and be completely transparent about raw data. Thank you, sir.

**03:06:46**

In recent years, particularly during the COVID pandemic, there's been a lot of skepticism about our public health institutions. Some of this I would say is warranted, but it's now created a pervasive lack of trust from the public that these institutions are acting in bad faith or failing to act with objective criteria. Failing in short, to act in the best interest of the public.

**03:07:16**

If confirmed, Mr. Kennedy, how will you work to regain the public's trust?

I suspect it will take some time in these important public health institutions through radical transparency. I'm going to make these. The reason people don't trust the public health agencies is because they haven't been trustworthy. And you gave the example of COVID At the beginning of COVID everybody was rushing to get that vaccine.

**03:07:44**

We had over a 90% vaccination uptake.

**03:07:47**

Yes, sir. CDC's most recent recommendation is that Americans take the AIF booster. Only 23% of Americans are complying. That means 77% of Americans no longer trust CDC. And that is the problem.

**03:08:04**

Yes, sir. In the absence of full information to I think agree with you, but I want your response. Might it make sense to share that absence of full information with the American people, that uncertainty. I think one of the things by observation and experience that I saw during the pandemic, because we had certain prominent doctors appear on television and indicate, no, you absolutely must not wear a mask.

**03:08:34**

Two weeks later, it's yes, you must wear a mask.

**03:08:37**

But they were certain and they even demonized people for not following the latest science, knowing there's a high level of uncertainty in that science. Would a measure of humility and as you say, radical transparency demonstrates humility help rebuild trust over a period of years? Absolutely. We need to tell Americans, well, we don't know.

**03:08:59**

We need to make sure studies that reach a null hypothesis are also published and that doesn't happen.

**03:09:08**

Sir, I think you are right about why health care costs are so high in the first place. The answer is indeed chronic disease. 90% of our healthcare spending goes towards managing it. As you say in your open statement, it's not in the main because of waste, fraud and abuse, although we know some exist.

It's not in the main because we have greedy executives at innovative world class companies.

**03:09:34**

It's not in the main because we haven't yet adopted an unsustainable Medicare for all scheme. It's because of this. So I'm encouraged that you intend to make that a point of emphasis as it pertains to your future leadership. I will say, with respect to Covid, it's not over. For a lot of Americans, it's not over.

**03:09:59**

I know the mission accomplished banner was convenient for the last administration, but as we continue to navigate the ongoing impacts of the COVID pandemic, we have many individuals here in the United States and around the world who are suffering from long term health effects that significantly impact their quality of life, work and daily activities.

**03:10:21**

And they've been largely ignored. Funding for Long Covid research was appropriated by Congress in December of 2020, followed by additional funding directed by the Biden administration in February 2024. Patient groups and industry publications have criticized the slow pace of clinical trial design and enrollment. If confirmed, will you collaborate with healthcare providers, researchers and effective communities to better understand and mitigate Long Covid's impact?

**03:10:49**

Yes or no, please. Absolutely. Senator, there's 16 million Americans. Will you commit to prioritizing Long Covid research and integrate this work into broader healthcare policies? Yes or no, please.

**03:11:00**

Yes. Patient groups, experts and industry publications have raised concerns around existing Long Covid funding being spent on observational research. In particular, criticism was directed towards recover funding being used to duplicate existing findings instead of funding trials for potential treatments or diagnostics? If confirmed, Mr. Kennedy, will you work with Congress so that going forward long Covid funding will be directed primarily towards trial or novel research directions and not replicating existing observational research?

**03:11:34**

Yes or no? Absolutely, Senator, with enthusiasm. Thank you so much.

If confirmed, how will you create a balance between your personal priorities of chronic disease and healthy lifestyle and the ongoing critical work of the department in areas that are focused on incentivizing and advancing innovation in modern medicine and pharmaceutical discovery? I think innovation is going to be the key to public health, and we have a unique opportunity now in history because of AI, because of telemedicine, and because of the quality of people that are now coming to HHS to actually save public health.

**03:12:23**

But it's all going to rely on innovation. And I don't want to do anything that inhibits or impairs the pace of innovation that's encouraging, from approving AI algorithms to determining Medicare coverage. We certainly need more innovation and we need good people in the department to assist with that effort.

**03:12:46**

So I'll follow up with a question about how you're going to attract and retain good people. Thank you, Chairman. Sorry to shut you down a little faster than I did the others. Senator Young, we are up against a vote deadline here and we have one more senator who gets his full time. I hope you'll keep it as close to five minutes as you can, Senator Welch.

**03:13:04**

And then I've promised Senator Wyden what five more minutes to be divided one minute with my colleagues getting one minute. And then if we can do that, we can get over to vote before they call the vote on the floor. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

**03:13:21**

And as you know, I'm a big have great reverence for your family from Massachusetts. When I got out of college, I was in the first class of Robert Kennedy Fellows, the memorial created by your family to honor the service of your father. I do community organizing in the west side of Chicago, and I certainly admire your energy in your effort here and desire to serve.

**03:13:50**

You know, there's a couple of things that are really important here. This is not just about a debate on vaccines.

**03:13:57**

It's a debate about qualifications, experience and priorities as to the person that will head Health and Human Services. And it's not just about what your answers are today or what

the questions are. It obviously has a lot to do with your whole record and your whole history. You know, your sister in her letter, or pardon me, your cousin in her letter said you've always been charismatic, able to attract others through the Strength of your personality, willingness to take risk and break rules.

**03:14:35**

That's, I guess, an attribute, but it can be a danger.

**03:14:37**

The question I fundamentally have is whether your willingness to disrupt and maybe break rules is going to be dangerous and destructive.

**03:14:49**

The character questions we didn't go into here, but there's some sketchy things. You've acknowledged your history with heroin. You've gotten over that. But there's incidents that do, I think, concern the question of whether the stability is there to be in charge of this major organization. And that's compounded by my concern that you don't have any experience managing a large organization, that you don't have any experience in government.

**03:15:16**

So those are things that have to be taken into account. But the issue for me is also priorities. A lot of your engagement in health has been on vaccines. Big, important issue. You actually disagreed, as I understand it, with President Trump, about Operation Warp Speed.

**03:15:31**

I think President Trump deserves a lot of credit for Operation Warp Speed. He knew we had to get a vaccine. And these other issues about a mask and whether you should wear it, whether when you got your groceries, the bag had to be left outside, remember that in the very beginning, Those are incidental to the core question that the president believed we had to have a vaccine.

**03:15:54**

And you contested that. That worries me.

**03:15:57**

That really, deeply worries me. Me. The other questions. Senator Cassidy asked you some questions about our health care system. I happen to believe that our health care system is

profoundly broken.

**03:16:10**

And it's not just about the chronic illnesses. That's about our diet, that's about our exercise. But we are getting premium increases in Vermont of 20% a year, 25% a year. And it's busting the bank for taxpayers. It's busting the bank for our wonderful Vermont employers who care about having health insurance that they can provide to their employees.

**03:16:32**

Senator Cassidy asked you a couple of questions about how you would reform Medicaid, and I didn't hear an answer. You mentioned that you thought Medicare Advantage was good. You have a good plan, no focus on what an incredible ripoff was reported in the Wall Street Journal by United Health Care, which was marketing Medicare Advantage and then paying doctors and nurses where they had assignments essentially to over over diagnose illnesses that didn't exist.

**03:17:08**

So they made billions and billions of dollars. And I've seen nothing coming out of the Trump administration and I've seen nothing coming out of your advocacy that is going after what is a rampant abuse by the insurance companies and overcharging people and not doing the job.

**03:17:30**

And by the Way the United Healthcare people, when they did that, they overdiagnosed. When the person really got sick, they dumped them. They dumped them. Go to the nursing home on your own. That's a broken health care system.

**03:17:42**

We spend the most and get the least. And I think there should be collective anger about this on both sides because all of our people are dependent on that health care system. And you're going to be working for a president who's on a lawless rampage right now. Okay. He has done something reckless with the pardons to these cop beaters.

**03:18:04**

I'm appalled by that. But that's just reckless. That's not illegal. He's impounded money. So right now, the Medicaid website went down.

**03:18:16**



He's impounded money. So the community health centers that Senator Warner was talking about are up in the air as to what they can do. Do you believe that a president can impound money that has been appropriated by Congress? Senator, let me answer the question about Medicare first. I have never defended that program or the rapacious behavior by insurance companies or the PBMs.

**03:18:44**

I understand that's a huge problem. And. All right, there's. I don't have time. I've got to get over to vote, so we can.

**03:18:52**

But you've asked me five questions. You got to give me a chance to answer one of them. Please be brief. Yeah, I. I've appoint.

**03:19:01**

I brought in. If I get confirmed. I've already appointed a general counsel, the first time in history. He's a former prosecutor who prosecuted the biggest Medicare fraud in the case in the state of West Virginia. I brought in a prosecutor for that job instead of a bureaucrat.

**03:19:18**

Precisely to address the important issues that you raised here. The only reason I didn't talk about these before is because I wasn't asked about them. I agree with you 100%. What about impounding a president, impounding money that, among other things, goes to health care? And you're saying that that's illegal?

**03:19:36**

That's correct. Well, my job is to uphold the Constitution. I'm going to take an oath to uphold the Constitution and I will administer the law and uphold the constitution.

**03:19:50**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe under what we've discussed. Discussed. I control.

**03:19:59**

Five minutes. I'm going to take one and give one to each of my four colleagues that remain. All right. And I would just say we really. This vote, they're going to call it in about eight minutes.

**03:20:09**

Thank you. So we have very little time. Two hours ago, colleagues, I asked Mr. Kennedy to reconcile his many anti vaccine statements with his handful of pro vaccine statements in. Instead, he gave us a word salad and ducked the issue.

**03:20:29**

The same was true Mr. Kennedy with respect to measles, where he wrote a book playing down the threat of measles, even though American families are very concerned about it and apparently families are still mourning in Samoa. And my last point would be that Mr. Kennedy said today really wasn't about him. And I just want to tell him it is all about you because I find your presentation to be both untrustworthy and unprepared because my colleagues have been seeing back and forth between Medicare and Medicaid and it's not clear which program you're using when.

**03:21:12**

So I want colleagues to know there is a lot more information to learn about Mr. Kennedy before we vote. I'm going to urge that to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to not make decisions on the basis of this session. I thank you for the additional time. And I guess my next minute is Senator Whitehouse, Senator Warren and Senator Smith.

**03:21:32**

And again, one minute each, please. There's been a lot of conversation about long late term abortions here. And I just want to make clear what Rhode Island OBGYN doctors describe as what is almost always happening when a late term abortion is needed. It is a childbirth gone wrong. The family has painted the room, it has bought the crib, maybe even decided on the baby's name and has gone to the hospital to welcome the new baby into their family in what is supposed to be a happy event.

**03:22:11**

And then things went wrong. Then the alarm started pinging, the lights started flashing, the medical professionals started rushing in and the question became who lives and who dies? The mom's life is often at risk and she may have other children she needs to care for. The baby's life may be at risk and one or both may die in that environment.

**03:22:48**

The doctors and the family own that decision.

**03:22:55**

Government has no place in that room at that point. I think we need to understand when this late term abortion gets bandied about. What you're dealing with is a tragedy that is

happening to a family who wanted that child and have suddenly been confronted with a moment in which they have to make what is probably going to be the worst decision of their lives.

**03:23:21**

And to try to shove the state legislature into that room is really offensive, really morally wrong. And I just want to make very clear what Rhode Island OB gyns tell me is the situation when these procedures have to be deployed.

**03:23:41**

Senator Warren thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, Mr. Kennedy, I wanted to ask about your role in the 2019 measles outbreak in Samoa in July 2018, two children died immediately after receiving a measles vaccine that nurses had mistakenly mixed with a muscle relaxant. The nurses get charged with manslaughter, but vaccination rates go down.

**03:24:07**

I asked you about this in my office. You told me flatly that your visit to Samoa had nothing to do with vaccinations. We now know that's not true. I have the documentation. You met with the Prime Minister.

**03:24:20**

You talked about vaccinations. You met with an anti vaccination vaccine influencer who described the meeting as, quote, profoundly monumental for this movement. So what happens? Vaccinations go down, there's a measles outbreak and children start dying. But you double down.

**03:24:39**

You didn't give up. Just four days after the Prime Minister declared a state of emergency, 16 people already dead, you sent a letter to him promoting the idea that the children had died not from measles, but from, quote, defective vaccine. You launched the idea that a measles vaccine caused these deaths. You are a very influential man.

**03:25:03**

In fact, you are called the leader of the disinformation dozen.

**03:25:08**

Multiple. UNICEF and who, the World Health Organization investigated this. They say the claims are false. It is not biologically possible what you claimed. And yet ultimately, more than 70 people died because they didn't get vaccines.

So my question is, do you accept even a scintilla, just even a sliver of responsibility for the drop in vaccinations and the subsequent deaths of more than 70 people? Anything you do differently? No, absolutely not. After there were two incidents which children died in 2015, again in 28 2015, it was from the measles vaccine.

**03:25:57**

As with New Zealand General Hospital found.

**03:26:01**

The government of Samoa banned the measles vaccine after the 2018. I arrived in July of the next year after the ban had been in place for a year. Mr. Chairman, understanding that you wanted to hold this to a minute and that I don't get to present all the facts and documentation I've got, how about if we just decide to make entries for the record on exactly what the record shows about Mr.

**03:26:31**

Kennedy's participation.

**03:26:32**

And I think he's answered the yes or no question. He takes no responsibility. Senator Warren, we will do that. And Mr. Kennedy, and to all the Senators, every Senator knows that following this hearing, they will be able to ask you questions off the record and you will be able to put answers back onto the record.

**03:26:48**

So please give that answer. I apologize that we're shutting you off for giving a full response right now. Senator Smith and we are way over time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**03:26:58**

So, Mr. Kennedy, you have said that you want to give infection, infectious diseases, a break for about eight years. You spoke about this with Senator Cantwell. My question to you has to do with avian flu. Over 100 million birds culled, the disease has spread to dairy cows, and there are now 67 confirmed human cases and one death.

**03:27:15**

So, Mr. Kennedy, do you intend to give research on bird flu a break? No, I intend to devote the appropriate resources to preventing pandemics. That's a central part of my job. What do you think is causing the avian influenza?

Influenza. This will go to my office. I think H5N1 viruses. So that's good to hear. Because in a recent book, I will submit this for the record, because we don't have that much time.

**03:27:37**

Mr. Kennedy has questioned the scientific basis for germs causing disease and the power of vaccines and antibiotics. I've never questioned that, Senator. Well, I will submit that for the record. Thank you.

**03:27:48**

Senator Warnock, one minute. I like the way you said that to the Baptist preacher. Thank you so much, Mr. Kennedy. Based on our conversations, it's my understanding that you support work requirements in Medicaid.

**03:28:00**

In 2020, President Trump approved a proposal from Georgia state leaders requiring Georgians to jump through a number of onerous bureaucratic hoops and fill out even more paperwork to verify work and get access to health care. I asked this as someone who represents a state that has not expanded Medicaid. The federal government, because of this waiver, spent \$70 million on Georgia's Medicaid waiver.

**03:28:23**

82% of that went to administrative costs. The point that I'm making is that the folks that they're insisting need to work, 90% of those folks are working.

**03:28:38**

They are caregivers or they have a disability. Let me give you one example. A woman I think of all the time. Her name is Heather. She's a traveling nurse from Dalton, Georgia, who falls into the Medicaid coverage gap.

**03:28:51**

Heather experienced a series of small strokes, leaving her unable to work full time. She's dedicated her life to caring for patients, but now she can't afford her own medical care out of pocket costs because she doesn't make enough to qualify for tax credits to buy private insurance. What does Heather need? Does she need work requirements, or does she need access to health care so she can finally get healthy and get back to work?

**03:29:20**

The individual that you described would need health care and not a work requirement.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And we are done.

**03:29:31**

With the questioning. Now, Mr. Kennedy, I apologize to you, to the audience, and to all of my colleagues to have to rush it here at the end, but we have a vote on the Senate floor that they're going to close in about three minutes. I want to thank you for appearing before this committee.

**03:29:47**

You have been accessible to the members and staff on both sides of the aisle of the Finance Committee throughout a rigorous process.

**03:29:53**

And I want the whole world to know that you spent hours in meetings answering questions outside of this hearing and providing documents and responses on issue after issue after issue. You've gone through the most thorough vetting process that any committee in this Congress puts anybody through. And I think that you have come through well and deserve to be confirmed.

**03:30:20**

I would like to remind my colleagues that the deadline for submitting any questions for the record is 5pm today. 5pm today.

**03:30:30**

And Mr. Kennedy, we ask that you respond to those questions as quickly as you possibly, possibly can. With that, I'm going to leave you in this room and and run over to vote. This hearing will be adjourned. I still encourage the audience to be polite and respectful, no matter what side of the issues you may be on.

**03:30:50**

And Mr. Kennedy, I look forward to working with you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**03:31:28**

If you missed any of today's confirmation hearing for HHS Secretary nominee Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. We'll air it again tonight at 9:00 Eastern here on C Span. And tomorrow, the nominee will be back on Capitol Hill for another hearing before the Senate Health Committee that gets underway at 10am Eastern. You can watch it live on the free C SPAN now video app or [online@cspan.org](mailto:online@cspan.org).