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**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Chairwoman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing:  
“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Health and Human  
Services”  
June 13, 2023**

(As prepared for delivery)

Secretary Becerra, let me start by reviewing the OMB guidelines which govern your appearance before the Committee today. When testifying, OMB Circular A-11, Section 22, states, “Witnesses will give frank and complete answers to all questions.”

“Frank and complete” – I emphasize this point because Acting Secretary of Labor Su and your fellow cabinet official, Secretary of Education Cardona, have failed to be either “frank” or “complete” in appearances before the Committee so far this Congress.

I watched earlier this year when you were unable to provide frank or complete answers to the Ranking Member of the Senate HELP Committee, Dr. Bill Cassidy, regarding questions about the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) telework policy. I hope you have come prepared with more adequate responses today.

Being forthcoming in your testimony and in answering the Committee’s questions is not only important to our duty to conduct oversight but also because the HHS budget is the largest in the executive branch. The president’s FY 2024 budget request calls for a massive \$144.3 billion in discretionary spending and \$1.7 trillion in mandatory spending. For context, one in every four dollars taken from taxpayers by the federal government is routed through HHS.

It wasn’t until the last ten years or so that the word “trillion” became a part of everyday budget parlance. It’s a worrisome trend. Budgets calling for more money

and reckless spending are crushing everyday Americans. We've seen the inflationary effect of this administration's five trillion dollars of deficit spending reflected in \$4 for a dozen eggs and \$4 for a gallon of gas.

Each dollar matters when wallets are stretched thin, so the enormous HHS budget requires a critical eye. Our oversight duties can be summed up in three rhetorical questions.

**One, are you being a good steward of taxpayer money?**

No, Mr. Secretary. This administration has drastically increased the burden on taxpayers by quietly but steadily moving enrollees from the small group market to Obamacare exchanges and Medicaid. The budget calls for the permanent expansion of Obamacare's advanced premium tax credits, which would lead to 1.6 million employees losing employer-sponsored coverage and costing \$247.9 billion over a ten-year span.

The all-out-assault on employer-sponsored insurance is costly, but it's also the trojan horse for Medicare-for-All. Though most workers like their employer-sponsored insurance, these plans are dwindling under the Biden regulatory scheme. Now, employee-sponsored coverage represents under half of all health plans, and fully socialist health care is all but certain if Medicare and Medicaid enrollees reach critical mass.

**Second, your regulatory scheme is hurting the taxpayer, but are your policies promoting a healthier America?**

Again, the answer is no. At the southern border, HHS has endangered countless minors through its Unaccompanied Children Program, then covered it up through whistleblower intimidation.

This means HHS knowingly transferred these children to the possession of others who were not their parents without ensuring that the child was healthy or that the transfer was necessary. Ultimately, this negligence may have contributed to the deaths of at least two migrant children in the past few months, which the Committee learned about through reporting by Fox News and CNN. It's troubling that HHS did

not think that this tragedy warranted a phone call.

**And lastly, your policies are not promoting a healthier America, but are you committed to upholding the constitutional rights of all Americans?**

Strike three. At least not with respect to the First Amendment, which protects Americans' free exercise of religion.

From the beginning, Secretary Becerra, your record has shown hostility towards faith-based groups. In fact, the only health care experience you had before assuming office was litigating an appellate court case in which you attempted to strong-arm Catholic nuns into paying for others' contraceptives.

You have carried the very same disposition toward religious liberty into your role as Secretary. Tooth and nail, you have fought religious groups by threatening them. Saint Francis Health System knows. You threatened to remove its Medicare accreditation if it did not extinguish the living flame in its chapel.

That is not to say that HHS serves no religion. Rather, antagonizing faith-based organizations is merely an attempt to smuggle your department's pseudo-religion through the backdoor.

Mr. Secretary, HHS serves the civil religion of progressivism and radical gender ideology. Minors are undergoing irreversible sex change operations in this country – operations that you encourage with your rhetoric and funding.

Radical gender ideology is not a marker of a healthy country. On every axis—anxiety, depression, suicidality, self-harm, you name it—these children are unhealthy and in desperate need of a society-wide fix, not individual genital mutilation. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson wrote that “Without health there is no happiness. An attention to health, then, should take the place of every other object.”

So, in the spirit of Jefferson, let's recognize and remedy our national mental health sickness. It seems to me that it's the worst where and when radical gender ideology is most pervasive. Maybe, Mr. Secretary, we should start there.

With that, the Committee looks forward to your direct, frank, and complete answers, and I yield to the ranking member for his opening statement.