

Durbin Slams President Trump's Comments on Vaccine Approval Timeline, ACA Repeal Efforts, and State of Testing in America During Senate Hearing

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today, at a Senate Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education Appropriations Subcommittee hearing about the Trump Administration's coronavirus response efforts, questioned witnesses about President Trump's claim that a COVID-19 vaccine would be ready "within weeks". Durbin also slammed the President's inaccurate suggestion that the United States has a high number of COVID-19 cases because of the number of tests conducted, and urged the health officials to expand efforts to increase the number of tests available to keep Americans safe.

"We have about 4.5 percent of the world's population in the United States. We have more than 20 percent of the deaths from COVID-19. Last night, the President said, 'We have 20 percent of the cases in the world because of the fact that we do much more testing. If we wouldn't do testing, you wouldn't have cases. You would have very few

cases.’ So let me ask Admiral Giroir: Would ending testing end the spread of the COVID-19 disease?” Durbin said.

Admiral Brett Giroir M.D., HHS Assistant Secretary for Health, responded, “No sir.”

Durbin also questioned witnesses about President Trump’s repeated claim about having a replacement plan for the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Currently, the Trump Administration and 18 Republican Attorneys General are before the Supreme Court of the United States seeking the elimination of the ACA, which would result in more than 22 million Americans losing health coverage in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The health law ensures recommended vaccines are available for free, and guarantees coverage and protections for people with pre-existing conditions, including the more than six million Americans whose COVID-19 diagnosis now counts as a pre-existing condition.

“The President said repeatedly that he has a replacement plan for the Affordable Care Act. As head of the agencies responsible for dealing with such a public health undertaking, I would like to ask you, does a replacement plan exist that you are aware of?” Durbin asked.

All three witnesses, Admiral Giroir; Dr. Robert Redfield, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and Dr. Bob Kadlec, HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, answered they were not aware of a replacement plan.