



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Chair Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01)

Joint Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services and Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions
Hearing

How to Save a Life: Successful Models for Protecting Communities from COVID-19.

Zoom

Tuesday, September 28, 2021 | 10:15 a.m.

Today, we are examining best practices for increasing COVID-19 vaccinations through the lens of health equity.

To date, the CDC reports that 686,639 people in the United States have tragically died from COVID-19.

We are now experiencing a resurgence of the virus as the Delta variant continues spreads across the country. Every day, we continue to lose an average of more than 2,000 of our loved ones, friends and neighbors.

Unfortunately, millions of unvaccinated Americans are still at risk of succumbing to this deadly virus. Vaccination rates have been the lowest in our most underserved areas, particularly rural and BIPOC – Black, indigenous and people of color –communities.

And for a multitude of reasons that our expert witnesses will discuss, many unprotected Americans are simply not getting the vaccinations they need to stay safe and healthy. These individuals are not concentrated in any single region of the country or on any one end of the political spectrum, so we, as policy makers, should be working together to better support our public health officials in reaching those populations.

To address obstacles to vaccination, the *American Rescue Plan Act* invested more than \$240 million in community-led efforts and provided significant funding to increase vaccination rates in rural areas.

These investments helped bolster the efforts of a wide range of community-based organizations and federally funded partners, such as the Aging Network supported by the Older Americans Act, and the Community Action Network authorized by the Community Services Block Grant.

These efforts have been essential to saving the lives of those who have long been medically underserved.

For example, many community action agencies across the country have supported vaccinations by engaging in outreach and education, providing vaccine registration, scheduling assistance and transportation, and hosting vaccination clinics or supporting, importantly, mobile units.

To highlight the successful approaches of these entities, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a report from the National Community Action Foundation entitled, “Community Action and Healthy Equity in Response to COVID-19.” Without object, so ordered.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to learn from successful vaccination initiatives like these so that we can provide every individual with the tools to finally defeat this virus.

If we listen to the advice of our medical experts and work together, we can keep our communities healthier and save lives.

So thank you, again, to our witnesses for being here today. I now yield to the distinguished Ranking Member, Ms. Spartz, for her opening statement. She will be serving as the Ranking Member for the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services for this hearing. I turn it over to you, Ms. Spartz.