



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Chairman Mark DeSaulnier (CA-11)

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.

Thank you, Chair Bonamici, thank you so much for this hearing. And thank you to all of our witnesses, really terrific for your words here and your work.

The Delta variant is continuing to pose a serious threat to our public health as we mourn the loss of more than 680,000 family members, friends, neighbors and fellow countrymen so far.

This is particularly true for communities that have historically been left behind by our health care system and suffered the greatest losses during this pandemic.

Despite these significant challenges, hope is far from lost. COVID-19 vaccinations continue to be our most effective strategy to prevent people from succumbing to this virus. And the critical investments we provided in the American Rescue Plan are helping to expand vaccinations in the areas that need them most.

Yet, even as we fight against the Delta variant, we are still seeing lawmakers and leaders politicize vaccinations instead of following the science and putting the health of their communities first.

This is a disservice to the American people that we all represent. We have a responsibility to unite behind this scientifically proven vaccine and public health guidance that are saving lives as we speak.

In the area I am very privileged to represent, the San Francisco Bay area, Contra Costa County, we have been working to make significant investments in vaccine equity.

In May, the equity gap between white residents in my county and African American residents, was 22%. By August, thanks to the hard work of the people in our public health system, by August, however, that equity gap had decreased from 22% to 6% – 22% to 6%.

To achieve these significant improvements, the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, the public hospital, recognized that they had to do more than just setup vaccine sites in neighborhoods with low vaccination rates.

They created a system with preferential scheduling in those neighborhoods for residents in zip-codes with the worst health outcomes were given the first appointments. They also created a multilingual call center to schedule appointments for residents and conducted outreach through text campaigns and direct phone calls to residents in those communities.

By coupling our equity lens with data and technology systems, Contra Costa County was able to prioritize residents and address the equity gap in a significant way in a short period of time.

Today, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what we should do and best practices from lessons they have learned in their critical efforts to help underserved communities recover from this historic pandemic and then make sure all Americans benefit.

I am now happy to recognize my friend, Ranking Member, Mr. Allen.