

Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Scott (As Delivered)
**Full Committee Hearing entitled, “*Reviewing the Policies and Priorities of the U.S.*
Department of Health and Human Services”**
June 6, 2018

Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is the first time an official from the Department of Health and Human Services has appeared before this Committee since President Trump took office. This opportunity to hear from the Department is long overdue, and I appreciate the Secretary for giving us his time this morning. It may not be his fault that no one has been here before but the fact is we haven't heard from anyone from the Department of Health and Human Services.

I also implore the Majority and the Administration to start scheduling these hearings at a time that gives all Members the full five minutes to ask questions – I understand the conflict in the schedule will truncate his appearance here so that Members will not have five minutes even after a

year and a half worth of questions – it's impossible to do oversight without time to ask questions and follow up.

The mission of Department of Health and Human Services is to enhance and protect the health and well-being of all Americans. Unfortunately, this Administration frequently appears to be more focused on advancing an ideology than fulfilling that mission.

Despite Congress's inability to repeal the Affordable Care Act and the public's resounding opposition to both repealing and sabotaging the law, the Administration continues to destabilize the health care system. For example, its efforts to expand the sale of low-quality health policies, which do not offer comprehensive coverage or adequate protections for people with pre-existing conditions, will continue to increase health care costs and undermine patient protections for millions of Americans. Elimination of the individual mandate, although popular, will also increase the cost of insurance prices.

I am also deeply troubled by the Administration's efforts to erode civil rights protections under the guise of religious liberty. Religious liberty is a fundamental American value, but religion should not permit a person to cause harm or subvert the civil rights of others.

Lastly, I am profoundly disappointed by the Administration's efforts to weaken the programs that help people meet their basic needs.

In the wake of a \$1.9 trillion tax cut, overwhelmingly focused for corporations and the top one percent, the president's proposed cuts to basic services that support struggling individuals and families across the country is particularly difficult to justify.

As the lead agency directed to improve American's health and well-being, I am surprised that this Department would support a budget that restricts families' access to essentials like health care, heating assistance, and food.

While I appreciate the continued engagement on areas where there may be some common ground, such as doing more to address the opioid crisis, we must get clarity on the Department's priorities and ensure the Department is accountable and faithfully executing the law.

Getting this clarity is difficult when some cabinet secretaries refuse to fit the Committee oversight hearing into their busy schedule, so Members can get the full five minutes they are entitled to.

I look forward, Mr. Secretary, to your testimony and for your continued cooperation as we conduct this vital oversight. Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.