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House of Representatives

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SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

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Chairman James E. Clyburn
Select Committee Briefing on
“Coronavirus Testing, Tracing, and Targeted Containment:
Steps to Reopen the Country”
May 13, 2020

I want to thank our panelists, Ranking Member Scalise and distinguished Democratic and Republican colleagues for your participation in this rather unique forum.

Over 80,000 U.S. citizens have lost their lives due to COVID-19, more than in any other country on earth.

Many families have lost loved ones, including my own; and our fellow Committee Member, Maxine Waters has recently experienced a loss in her family due to this pandemic.

This Select Committee was not established to cast blame on past failures, foreign or domestic, or to search for the virus’ origin but rather to pursue future success. We have been tasked with the urgent and important work of ensuring that our country’s response to this seminal crisis is effective, efficient, and equitable.

I agree with Ranking Member Scalise that one of the most important components of our response is answering the question that is being discussed at every kitchen table in America right now: how will we know when we are ready to safely reopen our country? To answer that question, we should be informed by history and guided by science.

While we all want to reopen as soon as possible, doing so before the proper safeguards are in place would cause more sickness and death.
A premature opening would also cause greater harm to the economy.

We must reopen responsibly. Therefore, we are beginning our Committee’s work with a briefing from public health experts—including two former FDA commissioners who served under Republican Presidents and three other experts whose primary interest is safeguarding the citizens of this great country.

But the greatness of this country must be accessible and affordable for all. That is why we need a comprehensive, coordinated, and centralized strategy of faster and freer testing.

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We also need to deploy proven public health measures—like contact tracing, tracing and surveillance—to quickly identify sources and locations.

Once we have identified new cases, we must provide necessary treatment in a medically appropriate isolated setting, while providing support to patients and their families. These are steps we must take while keeping Americans safe and preventing a second wave which will cost even more lives and livelihoods.

Today, I hope to hear what the federal government should be doing to support and coordinate states and local efforts to safely reopen our economies, rural and urban, in an efficient, effective, and equitable manner.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Scalise, for his opening remarks.