

Testimony of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
Nominee of President Trump to be
Secretary of Health & Human Services
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
January 29, 2025

Chairman Crapo, Ranking Member Wyden, and members of this distinguished committee, I am humbled to be sitting here today as President Trump's nominee to oversee the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I want to thank President Trump for entrusting me to deliver on his promise to make America healthy again.

I also want to thank my wife Cheryl, who is with us here today; and all the members of my large extended family, for the love that they have so generously shared. Ours has always been a family devoted to public service, and I look forward to continuing that legacy.

My journey into the issue of health began with my career as an environmental lawyer. Working with hunters and fishermen and mothers and the small towns on the Hudson, I learned that human health and environmental health are inseparable. The same chemicals that kill fish make people sick too.

Today, Americans' overall health is in a grievous condition. Over 70% of adults and a third of children are overweight or obese. Diabetes is ten times more prevalent than in 1960. Cancer among young people is rising by one or two percent a year. Autoimmune diseases, neurodevelopmental disorders, asthma, Alzheimer's, ADHD, depression, addiction, and a host of other physical and mental health conditions are on the rise.

The United States has worse health than any other developed nation, yet we spend far more on healthcare — at least double; and in some cases, triple. Last year we spent \$4.8 trillion, not counting indirect costs like missed work. That's almost a fifth of GDP. It's tantamount to a 20% tax on the entire economy. No wonder America has trouble competing with countries that pay a third what we do, yet have healthier workforces.

But I don't want to make this too much about money. It's the human tragedy that moves us to care. A healthy person has a thousand dreams. A sick person has only one. Today, over half of our countrymen and women are chronically ill.

When I met with President Trump last summer, I discovered he has more than just "concern" for this tragic situation, but genuine care. President Trump has committed to restoring the American Dream, and 77 million Americans delivered a mandate to do just that – due in part to his embrace and elevation of the Make America Healthy Again movement. This movement – led largely by MAHA moms from every state, is one of the most powerful and transcendent I've ever seen.

I have promised President Trump that if confirmed I will do everything in my power to put the health of Americans back on track.

And I have been greatly heartened to discover a deep level of care among members of this Committee too. I came away from our conversations confident that we can put aside our divisions for the sake of a healthy America.

For a long time, the nation has been locked in a divisive healthcare debate about who pays. Well, when healthcare costs reach 20% of GDP, there are no good options, only less bad. Shifting the burden around between government, corporations, and families is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Our country will sink beneath a sea of desperation and debt if we don't change course and ask: Why are healthcare costs so high in the first place?

The obvious answer is chronic disease. The CDC says 90% of healthcare spending goes toward managing chronic disease, which hits lower-income Americans the hardest. The President's pledge is not "To Make *Some* Americans Healthy Again." It's all of us.

There is no single culprit for chronic disease. Much as I have criticized certain industries and agencies, President Trump and I know that most of their scientists and experts genuinely

care about Americans' health. Therefore, we will bring together *all* stakeholders, in pursuit of this unifying goal.

Before I conclude, I want to make sure the Committee is clear about a few things. News reports have claimed that I am anti-vaccine or anti-industry. Well, I am neither; I am pro-safety. I worked for years to raise awareness about the mercury and toxic chemicals in fish, but that didn't make me anti-fish. All of my kids are vaccinated, and I believe vaccines have a critical role in healthcare.

Nor am I the enemy of food producers. American farms are the bedrock of our culture and national security. I was a 4H kid and spent my summers on ranches. I want to work with our farmers and food producers to remove burdensome regulations and unleash American ingenuity.

In my advocacy I have often disturbed the status quo by asking uncomfortable questions. Well, I won't apologize for that. We have massive health problems in this country that we must face honestly. And the first thing I've done every morning for the past 20 years is pray to God that He would put me in a position where I can end the chronic disease epidemic and bring health back to our children. That is why I am so grateful to President Trump for the opportunity to sit before you today and seek your support and partnership in this endeavor.

I will conclude with a promise — to the members of this Committee, to the President, and most of all to the tens of millions of parents across America, especially the moms who have propelled this issue to center stage: Should I be so privileged as to be confirmed, we will make sure our tax dollars support healthy foods. We will scrutinize the chemical additives in our food supply. We will remove the financial conflicts of interest in our agencies. We will create an honest, unbiased, science-driven HHS, accountable to the President, to Congress, and to the American people. We will reverse the chronic disease epidemic and put the nation back on the road to health.

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