

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA
CHAIRMAN

JOHN D. DINGELL, MICHIGAN
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
RICK BOUCHER, VIRGINIA
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NEW JERSEY
BART GORDON, TENNESSEE
BOBBY L. RUSH, ILLINOIS
ANNA G. ESHOO, CALIFORNIA
BART STUPAK, MICHIGAN
ELIOT L. ENGEL, NEW YORK
GENE GREEN, TEXAS
DIANA DEGETTE, COLORADO
VICE CHAIRMAN
LOIS CAPPS, CALIFORNIA
MIKE DOYLE, PENNSYLVANIA
JANE HARMAN, CALIFORNIA
JAN SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS
CHARLES A. GONZALEZ, TEXAS
JAY INSLEE, WASHINGTON
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN
MIKE ROSS, ARKANSAS
ANTHONY D. WEINER, NEW YORK
JIM MATHESON, UTAH
G.K. BUTTERFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLIE MELANCON, LOUISIANA
JOHN BARROW, GEORGIA
BARON P. HILL, INDIANA
DORIS O. MATSUI, CALIFORNIA
DONNA CHRISTENSEN, VIRGIN ISLANDS
KATHY CASTOR, FLORIDA
JOHN SARBANES, MARYLAND
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
ZACHARY T. SPACE, OHIO
JERRY MCNERNEY, CALIFORNIA
BETTY SUTTON, OHIO
BRUCE BRALEY, IOWA
PETER WELCH, VERMONT

JOE BARTON, TEXAS
RANKING MEMBER

RALPH M. HALL, TEXAS
FRED UPTON, MICHIGAN
CLIFF STEARNS, FLORIDA
NATHAN DEAL, GEORGIA
ED WHITFIELD, KENTUCKY
JOHN SHIMKUS, ILLINOIS
JOHN B. SHADEGG, ARIZONA
ROY BLUNT, MISSOURI
STEVE BUYER, INDIANA
GEORGE RADANOVICH, CALIFORNIA
JOSEPH R. PITTS, PENNSYLVANIA
MARY BONO MACK, CALIFORNIA
GREG WALDEN, OREGON
LEE TERRY, NEBRASKA
MIKE ROGERS, MICHIGAN
SUE WILKINS MYRICK, NORTH CAROLINA
JOHN SULLIVAN, OKLAHOMA
TIM MURPHY, PENNSYLVANIA
MICHAEL C. BURGESS, TEXAS
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE
PHIL GINGREY, GEORGIA
STEVE SCALISE, LOUISIANA

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

MAJORITY (202) 225-2927
FACSIMILE (202) 225-2525
MINORITY (202) 225-3641

energycommerce.house.gov

Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce Preparing for the 2009 Pandemic Flu September 15, 2009

Today's hearing on the 2009 pandemic H1N1 flu is a continuation of this Committee's ongoing interest in learning more about – and staying on top of – this developing and concerning situation. The hearing builds on the work of Chairman Pallone's health subcommittee which held an initial hearing on the issue earlier in the year.

From then until now, one thing has become crystal clear even as events continue to evolve: As a nation, we must be prepared for whatever the H1N1 virus brings in its path – to fight it as best we can and to ensure adequate and appropriate resources to treat those who fall seriously ill.

We are especially pleased, then, to have as our witness today, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius. Secretary Sebelius will share with us the government's plan for addressing this enormous challenge.

When the health subcommittee first met six months ago, there was much we did not know about the H1N1 virus. We didn't know how dangerous the virus was. We didn't know if there would be a vaccine available. We didn't even know if the virus would return in the fall.

Many of those questions have now been answered. We know this outbreak won't be the false alarm of 1976, when the surge of swine flu cases never materialized. Indeed, we are

already seeing a large increase in cases, a pattern that is likely to continue. The epidemic will undoubtedly lead to hospitalizations. Schools may close. Health care facilities may become overwhelmed. And almost certainly, there will be some who will die.

But there is also good news. This Administration has carried on the efforts begun several years ago to prepare the country for the very situation we must now tackle. The plans developed appear to be unfolding appropriately. And experts tell us that so far, the 2009 H1N1 epidemic will not be anything like what occurred in 1918, when an unusually dangerous flu virus devastated our nation.

More good news was reported just last week. We not only will have an effective vaccine in place; studies now indicate that the vaccine will probably require only a single dose, rather than the two doses many had predicted. As a result, I hope Secretary Sebelius will report today that across the country, we will have a good supply of vaccine, allowing us to avoid both the additional cost and the additional needle stick that a second dose would mean.

I expect that we will hear more about this, as well as other H1N1 flu activities, from Secretary Sebelius. I know all of us are also particularly interested in getting the Secretary's perspective on not only the progress we are making in taking on this virus, but also the difficulties we surely will face along the way.

But as we make preparations and carry out detailed plans for dealing with this new virus, we must also take heed of the battle we confront annually against seasonal flu. Each and every year some 36,000 Americans – mostly among the elderly – die from this preventable disease. We can and should do much better than that. I would hope that Secretary Sebelius can also share with us the Administration's thinking on addressing this concern, and in particular, how that approach relates to its H1N1 strategy.

With that, on behalf of the entire Committee, I want to thank the Secretary for appearing before us today. We all look forward to hearing from her and to learning more about the H1N1 challenges that lie ahead.