



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Confronting the Coronavirus: The Federal Response

March 11, 2020

Last week, the Committee held a hearing with non-government expert witnesses to examine the Federal response to the coronavirus and assess what more must be done to address this pandemic threat.

Today, the Committee will hear from representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and Centers for Disease Control on the issue.

Since our last hearing, I have become increasingly concerned about the threat posed by the coronavirus and the Trump Administration's lack of urgency necessary to mitigate the harm it poses to Americans.

Test kits have been slow to roll out, masks and personal protective equipment for healthcare workers are in short supply, and even basics like hand sanitizer are hard for consumers to find. We are clearly behind the curve, and it will take a concerted whole-of-government effort to catch up. As President Trump's own former Homeland Security Advisor Tom Bossert recently put it, "it's now or never" if we are to get the coronavirus under control.

I hope to hear today from our witnesses about what those steps might be, including whether limiting mass gatherings, temporarily closing schools, or restricting certain travel may be necessary.

I also expect to hear from Mr. Cuccinelli about the work of the White House Coronavirus Task Force and how he intends to make sure the Administration moves more quickly to help protect the American people confront the coronavirus.

Finally, I want to know what the Department of Homeland Security is doing in its role to protect the public and its own workforce. The coronavirus is here. We cannot change that. What we do in the coming days and weeks will determine what comes next for our country.

Congress has already shown its willingness to support the response with the recent emergency supplemental appropriations bill.

Our hearing today is another important part of our work, as we fulfill our constitutional oversight responsibilities.

I certainly hope the Administration is up to the task. The American people are counting on it.

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