



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Community Perspectives on Coronavirus Preparedness and Response

March 10, 2020

As a nation, we have faced homeland security crises from acts of terror like the September 11th terrorist attacks and catastrophic natural disasters like Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina, and Maria. Now, the outbreak of the coronavirus reminds how important emergency preparedness and response is for threats of all types.

To date, there have been hundreds of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States, and unfortunately Americans have lost their lives to this virus.

Now, more than ever, we need to let sound science guide our policies. It is clear that the coronavirus is a serious public health threat to this country and it must be treated as such.

Unfortunately, President Trump has downplayed the seriousness of the virus and contradicted CDC officials' warnings about the magnitude of the threat. During President Trump's recent trip to the CDC, which was abruptly canceled and then just as abruptly rescheduled, he wore a campaign hat, compared the delay in test kits to his Ukraine scandal, and spoke against his own officials about the availability of test kits.

Americans need real leadership from all public officials at all levels. Moreover, state and local governments need assistance from the Federal government. Test kits need to be pushed out for use in communities. Federal funding needs to be available to assist state and local agencies, as none of them are budgeted for responding to a global outbreak.

To that end, I am pleased that Congress moved quickly to get a supplemental funding package to the President's desk. I am hopeful that those resources will support coronavirus response efforts and allow us to make real headway against this threat.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today about how the Federal government can improve its response and provide more support to the state and local governments and agencies on the frontlines of this crucial effort. Their success will be our success over the coronavirus, so Congress and the Administration must be with them every step of the way.

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