



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Examining the National Response to the Worsening Coronavirus Pandemic

July 8, 2020

This hearing comes at a critical moment. The number of U.S. coronavirus cases is surging, topping 50,000 per day for the first time on July 1 and setting alarming records for new cases over the past week. Dr. Anthony Fauci recently warned that U.S. cases could double to 100,000 per day if current outbreaks in the South and West are not contained, putting the entire country at risk.

As infections threaten to spiral out of control, President Trump has tried to downplay the impact of COVID-19, calling 99 percent of cases “totally harmless” even as more than 130,000 Americans have died and many more have become seriously ill. Just this week he falsely claimed the U.S. coronavirus death rate is the lowest in the world, when in fact it is among the highest.

Unfortunately, the President’s comments come as no surprise. His Administration’s response to the coronavirus has been an abject failure by any reasonable measure. He ignored early intelligence on the virus, continues to disregard the opinions of doctors and scientists including those in his own administration, and perpetuates misinformation about COVID-19 rather than allowing the experts to speak directly to the American public about the disease.

Just yesterday, Congress received notification that the President has begun the process of withdrawing the U.S. from the World Health Organization in the midst of a pandemic, endangering global health against our own interest.

The President has shirked his Administration’s responsibility to prepare and respond to the pandemic and his own obligation to lead the Nation in a time of crisis, shifting the burden to State and local governments and the American people. The effects on American lives lost and damage to our economy have been devastating.

The United States currently has 20 percent of the world’s coronavirus cases despite having only 4 percent of the world’s population. As other countries are bringing their outbreaks under control, U.S. cases are headed in the opposite direction. Meanwhile, President Trump continues to deny the severity of the problem and is instead focused on his own re-election campaign.

Many State and local governments, public health officials, hospitals, and medical workers are doing the best they can under the circumstances. But we need real leadership at the Federal level if our country is to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, we will hear from those who are taking action where the Administration has failed to do so – a governor, a mayor, a public health official, and an emergency manager. They are in many ways on the front lines of this worsening pandemic — obtaining PPE and testing supplies, requiring masks and social distancing, and sounding the alarm about the devastating effects of this disease on minority and economically disadvantaged communities.

I hope to hear their testimony about what needs to be done to reverse the current trend of cases to protect our health and our economy. The American people are counting on us.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978