

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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**Ranking Member Raul Ruiz, M.D.**

**Opening Statement**

**Roundtable on “Preparing For the Future By Learning From the Past: Examining COVID Policy Decisions”**

**February 28, 2023**

Today, the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic officially convenes for its first meeting of the 118th Congress. Our work comes at a crucial moment for our nation’s public health.

For three years, COVID-19 has presented our government and our society with unprecedented challenges.

More than a million lives in the United States have been lost to the COVID-19 pandemic, which laid bare vulnerabilities and inequities in our public health infrastructure and our economy.

Although we have made significant strides to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still dealing with the long-term implications of this public health crisis.

COVID-19 continues to pose a serious threat to the health of some of the most vulnerable in our communities, and the spread of misinformation has undermined the American people’s trust in our nation’s public health institutions and in each other—further dividing us at a time when we should come together to grieve and heal from a crisis that has taken a toll on each of us, regardless of our political affiliation.

**As Ranking Member of the Select Subcommittee, I am optimistic that our work to evaluate the federal government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be responsible and objective.** And I am pleased to be leading this Select Subcommittee alongside my friend and colleague from Ohio, Chairman Wenstrup. Chairman Wenstrup and I have partnered on several shared priorities, and it is my hope that we can work constructively to advance the critical purpose of preventing and preparing for future pandemics. Because above all else, I am confident that no one in the United States—regardless of political party—wants us to relive the experience of another deadly pandemic.

**Today’s roundtable offers a meaningful opportunity for us to begin the work of objectively evaluating our nation’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am pleased to have invited Dr. Georges Benjamin—fellow emergency physician and Executive Director of the American Public Health Association—to participate.**

**However, I am troubled that other participants on today’s panel have a well-documented history of downplaying the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic and defying the overwhelming consensus of America’s scientific, research, and public health communities—including by advocating for a reckless herd immunity strategy for a deadly novel virus we knew little about and drawing into question vaccine policies that contributed to the prevention of more than three million fatalities.**

**To successfully carry out the charge of this Select Subcommittee, our work must lead with facts and follow the science. Anything less would be a misguided use of our time and taxpayer dollars and a betrayal of the interests of the American people.**

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