

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Briefing with the Principal Deputy Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services May 26, 2020

Good morning. Thank you all for being here today.

We are privileged to be joined today by Christi Grimm.

She is the Principal Deputy Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services, and she is performing the duties of the Inspector General.

She is a career professional who has served under four presidential administrations, both Democratic and Republican.

Last month, the HHS IG issued a report revealing the gravity of challenges that hospitals have faced during the coronavirus crisis—from caring for sick patients, to obtaining protective gear for staff, to stocking basic medical supplies.

This report was intended to help policymakers understand these challenges and to help hospitals overcome them, which benefits us all.

Unfortunately, President Trump personally attacked Ms. Grimm—and for no valid reason. His criticisms were baseless, and it seems clear that he just wanted everyone to pretend there were no challenges in our health care system. Of course, we all know that was wrong.

Ms. Grimm should not have had to endure these senseless personal attacks just for doing her job. Nevertheless, we thank her for tolerating them with dignity while she continues serving the American people.

The HHS IG's office is crucial in ensuring that the \$175 billion that Congress gave to HHS for emergency relief under the CARES Act is spent effectively and efficiently. The HHS IG is also a member of the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee—which I am proud to have proposed in the CARES Act.

The HHS IG—and all Inspectors General—are more important now than ever. IGs are playing a critical role in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse in our government's response to the pandemic.

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Regretfully, in recent weeks President Trump has taken steps to remove, replace, or attack numerous officials in the IG community—including at the State Department, the Transportation Department, the Intelligence Community, and the Department of Defense, whose Principal Deputy Inspector General had also been appointed to lead the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee.

As the Committee with jurisdiction over the entire IG community, it is our responsibility to protect the IGs from political interference.

For these reasons, on Friday, I joined with Majority Leader Hoyer, Chairman Connolly, and Chairman Lynch in introducing H.R. 6984, legislation that will both strengthen the independence of IGs and protect them from political retaliation by requiring that IGs be removed only for good cause, and that documentation justifying removal be provided to Congress.

The requirement that IGs only be removed for cause was also included in the HEROES Act that passed the House. I hope all Members will support our bill.

I also want to thank Chairman Connolly, the Chair of our Government Operations Subcommittee, for the phenomenal work he has been doing to protect and strengthen our Inspectors General. Chairman Connolly has been leading a series of IG briefings, and he and his staff were critical to putting together today's briefing.

With that, I recognize Ranking Member Jordan for any remarks he may have.