

## United States Senate

March 26, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

Thank you for speaking with me prior to your confirmation about your priorities for the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I am deeply concerned with the Biden Administration's health care proposals thus far, and its apparent lack of respect for the sanctity of life. I write to urge you to respond to a number of pressing health care issues as you begin your new role.

During your confirmation hearing, you spoke about respecting the diversity of opinions on the abortion issue and following the law. I expect as HHS Secretary you will follow all U.S. laws, which protect religious freedom and the rights of unborn children. It is also my expectation that you will support the Hyde Amendment, along with all other traditional legislative protections, which prevent taxpayer funding from being used for abortions.

The rising cost of health care continues to negatively impact American families and must be urgently addressed. HHS plays an important role in keeping health care affordable for Americans through the Medicare, Medicaid and commercial insurance markets, but federal spending on health care continues to rapidly increase and there is no plan to tackle runaway costs. I am concerned by recent reports indicating that the Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust Fund is estimated to become insolvent by 2026, and how this may affect the nearly five million seniors in Florida who rely on Medicare benefits. Medicare-for-all proposals being floated by Democrats would actually mean Medicare-for-none, ruining the Medicare system and throwing 150 million people off the private insurance they like. The solution to the crisis of health care costs is not more government participation, it's less. One way to bring about Medicare reform is to reexamine the way it pays for services. The current system penalizes patients with a 20% co-pay for identical services priced differently based on where services are administered. This difference between inpatient and outpatient settings, or a site neutral payment policy, requires a deeper review. The Administration must work with Congress on common sense solutions to protect Medicare without cutting benefits, and provide quality healthcare at a price American families can afford.

The U.S. has also recently rejoined the World Health Organization (WHO), despite concerns from myself and others that the WHO has failed to live up to its promise of conducting an independent investigation as to the origins of and Communist China's lies about the COVID-19 pandemic. The WHO has made critical missteps throughout the pandemic. It ignored Taiwan's early warnings about COVID-19<sup>i</sup>, continues to deny Taiwan membership, and has praised China's supposed transparency

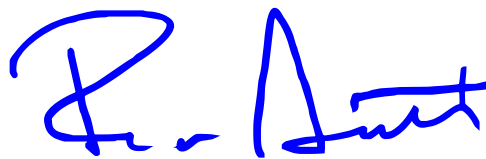
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and success with COVID-19 despite the virus raging out of control.<sup>ii</sup> I have been clear that the U.S. should stop funding the WHO until major reforms take place and its leadership is replaced. Our differences with Communist China are not merely “different perspectives.” Communist China is our enemy, and we cannot use taxpayer dollars to prop up an organization being used as a puppet by General Secretary Xi. As you begin your work at HHS, it is incredibly important that you increase oversight over the WHO, scrutinize its moves to cover bad actors, inform Congress of your interactions with the WHO, and hold the WHO and its member states accountable.

Lastly, as more Americans receive the COVID-19 vaccine and our communities work toward a new normal, we must do everything possible to provide a roadmap for reopening our economy. Industries that were thriving prior to the pandemic have been devastated and the livelihoods of millions now depend on leaders at every level of government taking a pragmatic approach to recovery. In my home state of Florida, the cruise industry was hit especially hard, and has been non-operational for much of the past year. Under the prior administration, the cruise industry was having weekly conversations with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and working on a pathway toward reopening. The CDC was expected to issue Phase 2 guidance by the end of 2020, however, no such guidance has been issued. I expect that you will prioritize this issue, which impacts the livelihoods of many Floridians, and ask that the CDC resume its weekly calls with the industry and issue Phase 2 guidance as soon as possible.

As the new Secretary of HHS, you have the great responsibility of protecting life and enhancing the health and well-being of all Americans. It is my expectation that you will take these responsibilities seriously and work to address the needs of American families.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott  
United States Senator

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<sup>i</sup> <https://time.com/5826025/taiwan-who-trump-coronavirus-covid19/>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/chinese-officials-note-serious-problems-in-coronavirus-response-the-world-health-organization-keeps-praising-them/2020/02/08/b663dd7c-4834-11ea-91ab-ce439aa5c7c1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/chinese-officials-note-serious-problems-in-coronavirus-response-the-world-health-organization-keeps-praising-them/2020/02/08/b663dd7c-4834-11ea-91ab-ce439aa5c7c1_story.html)