

Opening Statement
Nomination Hearing for Mr. Sean G. Kaufman, MPH, CPH, IFBA BRM CP
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee
Chairman Bill Cassidy
Hearing Date | Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Senate HELP Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Chairman, I am deeply grateful for this opportunity. I want to thank President Trump and Secretary Kennedy for their confidence in my experience and for the trust they have placed in me through this nomination.

Most importantly, I want to thank God and the people who have walked this path with me. My family—my wife Jacqueline, and my children Sean Patrick, Aiden, and Jamielynn—have given more than anyone should ever have to give in support of public service. Their patience, strength, and love are the reason I am able to be here today. I am also grateful to my friends, mentors, and colleagues who have stood beside me through every stage of my career.

I also want to recognize the extraordinary men and women of America's public health and healthcare system. The doctors, nurses, laboratorians, epidemiologists, emergency responders, and scientists who show up every day—often quietly, often without recognition—are the true backbone of our national preparedness. They are the ones who stand between uncertainty and safety, between crisis and recovery. Our country is safer because of their service.

America must have a dedicated leader whose sole responsibility is to strengthen preparedness and coordinate response across our health system. My public health experience spans more than three decades of service, beginning during the HIV/AIDS pandemic and extending through some of the most significant public health emergencies of our time. I supported response efforts following the September 11 terrorist attacks and the 2001 anthrax attacks, as well as outbreaks of SARS and the H1N1 influenza pandemic. I prepared, coordinated, and managed the Emory University Ebola Treatment Unit, which cared for the first two Ebola patients treated in the United States, and I deployed to both Liberia and Nigeria during the West Africa Ebola epidemic. Most recently, I served in multiple leadership, preparedness, response, and policy capacities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to strengthen public health readiness and emergency response efforts at critical moments for our nation and the global community.

We are reminded every day that the threats we face are evolving. Some are familiar—like emerging infectious diseases and the kinds of deliberate biological threats we have confronted since 9/11 and the Anthrax attacks. Others are newer and still unfolding, shaped by rapid

advances in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and interconnected systems that can both strengthen and challenge our preparedness.

At the same time, we continue to face complex, layered risks—chemical, radiological, cyber, and other hazards—that can disrupt communities in ways that are increasingly difficult to predict. These realities demand that we not only strengthen what already exists, but build systems that are faster, smarter, and more resilient than anything we have had before.

At its core, ASPR's mission is simple and profound: to save lives. There is no higher calling in public service. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself fully to that mission—to prepare, protect, and respond with urgency, compassion, and discipline when Americans are at their most vulnerable. I will give this role everything I have, every day of the year, without reservation.

Having worked in biosafety and biosecurity in high-containment environments around the world, I have seen how quickly new threats can emerge—and how important it is to stay ahead of them. The pace of change in recent years has been extraordinary. Tools like genomic sequencing, advanced biotechnology, and artificial intelligence have transformed what is possible in both science and preparedness. But they have also expanded the complexity of the threats we must be ready to face.

This is not a distant concern. It is a present responsibility.

If confirmed, I would focus on five priorities:

First, strengthening and reauthorizing PAHPA to ensure our nation's preparedness authorities reflect today's realities and tomorrow's risks. This includes improving coordination across federal partners, strengthening accountability, and ensuring we can respond quickly and effectively across the full spectrum of emergencies.

Second, accelerating the development of medical countermeasures, therapeutics, and diagnostics so that America is never waiting at the start of a crisis. We must build a system that is continuously ready—capable of adapting rapidly to both natural and engineered threats.

Third, investing in the people who make preparedness possible. Our healthcare workers, emergency responders, public health professionals, laboratorians, and scientists must be trained, supported, and equipped not only for today's challenges, but for the demands of the future.

Fourth, modernizing how we develop, manufacture, and deliver critical medical products so that when emergencies happen, we can move quickly, at scale, and with resilience—getting the right tools to the right people at the right time.

And fifth, strengthening partnerships across every level of our nation—federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial—as well as with industry and academia. Preparedness is not the work of one agency or one sector. It is a shared responsibility, and when it is done well, it becomes one of the clearest expressions of national strength and unity.

In closing, I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I will approach this role with humility, determination, and a deep respect for the trust placed in this office. I will work every day to help ensure that when the next crisis comes—and history tells us it will—America is ready.

Thank you.