

Testimony of Dr. Casey Means

Nominee for Surgeon General -- Department of Health and Human Services

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Good morning, Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. I want to thank President Trump for nominating me to serve as the Surgeon General, and Secretary Kennedy for his support. Thank you for also being willing to postpone my hearing when I went into labor 5 hours before the hearing started. Our precious baby boy was born on the hearing day.

As a physician, I've always been inspired that the root of the word *healing* means “to return to wholeness.” Nothing is more urgent than restoring wholeness for Americans—physically, mentally, and societally. We are now the most chronically ill high-income nation in the world. We live shorter, sicker lives than peer developed countries. Today's children are projected to live shorter lifespans than their parents. We spend trillions annually on reactive sick care; nearly 150 million Americans rely on federal healthcare programs; and we invest more than \$50 billion each year in research—yet outcomes worsen and disparities widen. Our nation is angry, exhausted, and hurting from preventable disease. Rates of high blood pressure, many cancers, autoimmune conditions, type 2 diabetes, mental health disorders, dementia, neurodevelopmental challenges, and youth suicide have all increased in the past two decades.

This public-health crisis is touching every American family. It is robbing our children of possibility, our workforce of productivity, and our nation of security. It strains our federal budget and dims hope for millions.

We must confront this epidemic through a vision grounded in science, dignity, shared humanity, and respect for freedom—not politicization and division. Public health leadership must address the evidence-based, modifiable drivers of chronic diseases including ultra-processed diet, industrial chemical exposure, lack of physical activity, chronic stress and loneliness, and overmedicalization. I have been asked to help our nation get healthy and answer the call of millions—especially mothers—who are begging for transparency and support. That is what I am here to do.

I believe every American shares a core yearning to thrive and help their families thrive. But we are asking people to make healthy choices in environments squarely structured against them. Good policy and education can make health easier, more affordable, and more accessible. I know our current leaders at Health and Human Services (HHS) and across the

federal government are committed to the ambitious policies outlined in the MAHA Strategy released last year that focus on advancing research, realigning incentives, increasing public awareness, and fostering private sector collaborations to end the childhood chronic disease crisis. Specific efforts are already underway to fund and promote more whole, healthy food for Americans; reduce harmful chemical exposure; address financial conflicts of interest in our agencies; fund research focused on disease prevention and reversal; and make institutions accountable to the American people with measurable health outcomes.

President Trump and Secretary Kennedy have invited a mature, candid, grand conversation about how our medical education and fixing perverse incentives can pull us back from the brink, and for this I am profoundly grateful.

My professional history has prepared me to meet these complex times as an innovative, unifying, and practical leader focused on reversing chronic disease. Over the past 15 years, I have treated thousands of patients in clinics and operating rooms, run my own medical practice, and co-founded a health technology company that empowers individuals with metabolic health data to address blood sugar dysregulation—a condition affecting more than 50 percent of American adults. I recruited leading researchers from Yale, UCSF, Brigham Young University, Cleveland Clinic, and others to support this effort, and the company launched a 10,000-participant academic–industry research collaboration on early metabolic disease detection.

I have held biomedical research positions at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Stanford, Oregon Health & Science University, and New York University, publishing this biomedical research in major medical journals. I was recruited as a Faculty Course Director at Stanford, where I taught undergraduate and graduate students on nutrition and health, and I served as Associate Editor of a medical journal focused on prevention and disease reversal. I have spoken internationally on chronic disease and wrote one of the most successful health books of the decade, outlining a vision for reversing this epidemic through personal empowerment, culture change, and policy reform. I graduated from Stanford University with honors and from Stanford Medical School, where I was inducted by unanimous vote into the Honors Society for patient care.

Mental and physical health are unraveling from shared root causes that we can fix. Preventable heart disease—the number-one killer—is emblematic of a nation with a broken heart. Diabetes, representing cellular energy collapse, is draining our human potential. Dementia, depression, and neurodevelopmental decline reflect a society losing its mind. Our bodies are telling us the current path is unsustainable.

There is another way—a path that unites rigorous science with reverence for our miraculous lives and planet and brings Americans and our medical institutions together around actual healing and prevention. This path is also economically sound, with the potential to save trillions of dollars annually. As I sit here in the early months of motherhood, I feel profound awe at the privilege we have as adults to create a better world for future generations.

As Surgeon General, I would call on every American and the Public Health Service to join in a great national healing—one that halts preventable chronic disease, makes healthy living the easiest choice, honors the body's connection to the environment, and puts America back on the road toward wholeness and health.

I look forward to answering your questions.