

Opening Statement
Nomination Hearing for Dr. Nicole Saphier, M.D.
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
Chairman Bill Cassidy, M.D.
September 16th, 2026

Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm grateful to President Trump for the confidence he has placed in me with this nomination, and to Secretary Kennedy for his support. I also want to thank my family and friends for standing with me throughout this process. It is an incredible honor to be considered for the role of Surgeon General of the United States.

I come before you today as a physician, a longtime advocate for prevention, and someone who has spent much of her career communicating with the American public about their health. Those three threads, patient care, prevention, and communication, are what I hope to bring to this role if confirmed, and they're the throughline of everything I'd like to share with you this morning.

For the last decade and a half, I have worked as a board-certified radiologist with advanced training in oncologic and breast imaging, caring for patients during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Practicing medicine has taught me far more than any textbook could. Every day, I sit face-to-face with patients and families, delivering difficult diagnoses and guiding them through uncertainty.

One of the hardest parts of my job is not interpreting the images, it is sitting across from a patient and telling them they have cancer. No training fully prepares you for that moment, and over the years I have delivered that news to friends, colleagues, and members of my own community. Those conversations are not easier with people you know. In many ways, they are harder.

What those years at the bedside have taught me is that good medicine is not only about diagnosing and treating disease. It is about listening to patients, earning their trust, and giving them information they can actually understand and use. That responsibility, the physician-patient relationship, has shaped how I think about medicine, and it is what first drew me toward prevention and early detection, where I have seen firsthand what a difference catching disease earlier can make in a person's life.

That clinical experience is what led me, years ago, to advocate for breast density notification legislation, helping ensure women knew that dense breast tissue could both raise their cancer risk and make cancers harder to catch on a mammogram. It was not, at the time, an uncontroversial position. But I believed then, as I do now, that giving patients accurate information about their own health is never the wrong decision. That fight, and its eventual adoption as national policy, taught me that our health system advances when we're willing to challenge complacency and have honest conversations, even uncomfortable ones.

My commitment to prevention predates the current national conversation around it, including in my 2020 book, *Make America Healthy Again*. I have long believed that we spend too much time and too many resources treating chronic disease after it takes hold, and not enough helping Americans reduce their risk before illness begins. We are seeing the consequences of that imbalance now: rising cancer rates in adults under 50, cardiovascular disease that remains our leading cause of death despite being largely preventable, and a mental health crisis, particularly among young people, that may define this generation's public health challenges.

My approach to health and wellness is not complicated: we should treat illness when it occurs, but we also need to do a far better job of helping people stay healthy in the first place. That is the same conviction that animates the President's focus on chronic disease and the Make America Healthy Again agenda: that we cannot build a health system focused only on treating illness after the fact. We have to help Americans live healthier lives, through nutrition, physical activity, sleep, preventive screening, and health literacy, before disease ever takes hold.

The same skills that matter in an exam room, listening, building trust, explaining complicated information clearly, helping someone understand risk, become even more important when the audience is the entire country. For years, I have worked to take complex and often rapidly changing medical information and make it clear, understandable, and useful to millions of Americans, including throughout the uncertainty of a global pandemic.

That experience taught me how badly this country needs public health communication that is straightforward and grounded in the best available evidence, honest about what we know, honest about what we don't yet know, and willing to say so when something once considered settled no longer is. During COVID-19, confusion, politicization, and the dismissal of reasonable questions did lasting damage to public trust in our institutions, and regardless of party, that should concern all of us. If confirmed, restoring that trust through transparency and consistency would be one of my highest priorities.

During the COVID pandemic, I also saw, up close, what the men and women of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps are capable of. Watching thousands of officers deploy to hospitals, nursing homes, tribal communities, and underserved regions throughout the pandemic left me profoundly inspired by their professionalism and sense of duty. If confirmed, I would be honored to serve alongside them.

My years as a physician have kept me grounded in the needs of patients and families. My work in prevention has convinced me that we must do more to help Americans stay healthy, not simply treat them once they're sick. And my years communicating directly with the public have prepared me to explain health and medicine in a way people can understand and trust.

As Surgeon General, I would bring those experiences together in service of the President's mission to make America healthier, helping Americans live longer, healthier lives, giving

individuals and families better information to make decisions about their own health, and serving as a trusted, effective voice for the American people.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask for your support, both in this Committee and on the Senate floor, so that I may have the honor of serving the American people in this role. I look forward to your questions.