

Opening Statement
Nomination Hearing for Dr. Erica Schwartz, MD, JD, MPH
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, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be considered for the role of Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I would like to thank President Trump and Secretary Kennedy for the trust they have placed in me with this nomination.

I am deeply honored by the opportunity to continue serving our nation. I would also like to recognize my husband, whose unwavering support has made a lifetime of public service possible.

The most important thing to know about me is that I come from a God-fearing military family. My father served in the Navy, my older brother served in the Marines, my older sister was a line officer in the Navy, and my younger brother served as a medic in the Army. I had the privilege of serving both in the Navy and with the United States Coast Guard. In our family, service was never viewed as a job — it was a calling, a responsibility, and an act of faith.

My academic career includes a biomedical engineering degree, a Medical Doctorate from Brown University, a Master of Public Health in epidemiology, and a law degree. After medical school, I followed in my father's footsteps and joined the Navy as a physician. I served as an occupational medicine physician and clinical epidemiologist focused on protecting the health of the men and women of the Navy — ensuring they were protected from hazardous exposures while learning public health from a mission-first, operational perspective.

I later transferred to the United States Public Health Service and was detailed to the Coast Guard, where I focused on force health protection for responders to major national and global crises, including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the Deepwater Horizon disaster, and the West Africa Ebola outbreak. In each of these moments, the men and women of the Coast Guard depended on me to get it right. There was no margin for error.

I eventually served as the Coast Guard's Chief Medical Officer at the rank of two-star admiral, where I was responsible for the Coast Guard's healthcare system, safety program, and work-life programs. I was later asked to serve as the United States Deputy Surgeon General.

During my tenure, our nation faced one of the greatest public health challenges in modern history — the COVID-19 pandemic. One of my core responsibilities was ensuring access to testing without overwhelming the healthcare system. After observing innovative approaches abroad, including drive-through testing models, my team and I rapidly designed and operationalized a

scalable national solution. We established drive-through testing sites across all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, ultimately testing nearly 11.5 million Americans. This effort expanded access to care while preserving critical hospital capacity during a national emergency.

Public health is in my DNA. I am here today because I want to continue serving this nation and because I believe deeply in the mission and future of the CDC.

If confirmed, my first priority will be restoring trust in public health through radical transparency and unwavering scientific integrity. The American people deserve public health guidance that is clear, honest, evidence-based, and free from political influence. I will never betray the science. I will always stand on science and speak the truth, even in difficult moments. My sacred responsibility as CDC Director would be to protect the health of the American people based on evidence, data, and scientific rigor. I will not be afraid to challenge positions or policies that are not grounded in sound science.

Second, we must modernize the CDC into a near real-time public health enterprise capable of detecting threats early and responding faster. Twenty-first century threats require twenty-first century systems. We must build interoperable, modernized data infrastructure that allows us to identify outbreaks, hazardous exposures, and emerging threats with speed, precision, and accountability.

Third, we must empower states, local communities, tribes, and territorial partners as the operational backbone of American public health. Public health works best closest to the people. The CDC should provide tools, embedded expertise, operational support, and funding flexibility — not rigid top-down control. My operational background has taught me that durable public health solutions are built through partnership, trust, and local execution.

The CDC is home to an extraordinarily talented and dedicated workforce. These public servants work tirelessly, often behind the scenes, to protect the health of Americans every single day. My role as Director would be to support them, empower them, and ensure they have the tools and leadership necessary to succeed.

At a time when trust in institutions has been challenged, we have an opportunity to restore confidence, strengthen scientific integrity, modernize our systems, and refocus on the CDC's core mission: protecting the health and safety of the American people.

I am committed to working with this Committee, with public health leaders across the country, and with communities across America to ensure the CDC fulfills its mission with excellence, integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Length: 5 minutes

