

Opening Statement
Nomination Hearing for Dr. Brett Giroir, M.D.
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee
Chairman Lamar Alexander
August 1, 2017

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify before you today. I am especially grateful to the many Committee Members who spent time meeting with me individually to engage in substantive discussions about important public health issues facing our nation.

I am honored to appear before you as the President's nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Health, and am pleased to be joined here by my wife of 32 years, Jill, my mother Freida – a retired police officer and cancer survivor– and our younger daughter Madeline. Not here today is our older daughter Jacqueline, who just recently delivered our first grandchild, her husband Erik – an Iraq veteran - and my late father Frank, also a police officer and a veteran, who would have been truly honored to attend this hearing.

As this Committee well knows, the Assistant Secretary for Health is the senior advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on issues of public health and science. Component offices – including the Office of the Surgeon General, the National Vaccine Program Office, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, and the Offices of Adolescent Health , Minority Health, Women's Health, Population Affairs, and HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy - provide leadership and coordination across the US government for a vast array of science and public health issues that touch nearly every single American.

Should I be fortunate enough to gain your confidence and be confirmed, I will be a passionate advocate for policies, programs, research, and innovative solutions to enhance the health of all Americans, and especially support initiatives that reduce our current disparities in mortality and human suffering. There are no silver bullets, but the pathway is clear: elevate prevention and early detection by empowering individuals and groups; embrace science and welcome new data; listen to all stakeholders especially those with diverse viewpoints; foster an innovative environment that maximizes the creativity of academia and the private sector; remain humble; and always focus on patients and their families.

Because of my parent's emphasis on education, I became the first member of my family to attend college, and graduated from Harvard University. I chose to attend medical school in Dallas at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, not only for their renowned faculty, but mainly for the opportunity to provide compassionate care to patients at one of our nation's preeminent safety net public hospitals - Parkland Memorial Hospital. I completed a residency and chief residency in pediatrics and then a fellowship in pediatric critical care medicine. I remained on the faculty at UT Southwestern for 10 years, becoming a tenured professor, associate dean, and Chief Medical Officer at Children's Medical Center where I was privileged to care for thousands of critically ill children and their families.

My career then took an unexpected turn, when I was recruited by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, commonly known as DARPA. I joined a science and technology assessment committee, and ultimately DARPA itself as the Deputy Director, and then Director, of the Science Office. I rapidly realized that when the government collaborates with academic and industry partners, there can be unimagined advances in medicine and human health. In this regard, one of the most meaningful

accomplishments of our DARPA team was the development of a revolutionary prosthetic upper limb that restored near-normal human capabilities, and could be controlled by muscles, nerves, or even directly by the brain.

Following my assignment at DARPA, I have remained dedicated to improving disease prevention, patient empowerment, and the development of new vaccines and treatments for infectious diseases and cancer. I truly feel called to the Assistant Secretary for Health position for one reason, and that is, to do whatever I can to enhance the health of our nation. To do so will require broad collaboration, public engagement, and bold initiatives. I will also do everything in my power and abilities to support and advance the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, which for more than 200 years, has been America's warriors against disease, with the mission to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation.

I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you and welcome your questions.