

Dr. Susan Collier Monarez – Senate Confirmation Hearing Statement

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

June 25, 2025

Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and members of the committee I am humbled to be here before you today and I am honored to be nominated by the President to be the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I'm joined by my family, including my children, Bella and AJ, who are my inspiration in all things.

I want to start by telling you about myself. I grew up in rural Wisconsin, the daughter of a dairy farmer. I learned the meaning of hard work very early in life. When illness struck our herd, my father had to sell the farm and became a police officer to support us. My mother also worked wherever she could: in factories, clerical jobs, and — my favorite — as a librarian. Though we didn't own a television, we always had the world at our fingertips through books.

Hard work, community, resilience, fiscal responsibility, and the value of education are the core values this upbringing instilled. We had little money, so through academic scholarships and side jobs, I paid my own way through college, attending the University

of Wisconsin. It was there, during my first semester, at the dawn of the genomics era, that I discovered a passion for science and health innovation and I have not stopped since then.

I earned my Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology and conducted postdoctoral research at Stanford. My academic work focused on two deadly diseases: African Sleeping Sickness - which in its most severe forms, is 100% fatal without rapid treatment – and Toxoplasmosis, once a leading cause of death in HIV/AIDS patients.

I did this work for over a decade. While treatments for African Sleeping Sickness and Toxoplasmosis remain limited, public health advancements like screening and prevention programs have drastically reduced the burden of both diseases.

These experiences cemented my belief: good public health saves lives.

After academia, I shifted to shaping public health policy at the federal level. I helped establish the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, prioritizing investments in medical countermeasures. At the Department of Homeland Security, I led efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to the world's deadliest pathogens.

During the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, I served on the Ebola Task Force. Here, I saw the incredible work of public health, but also the vulnerabilities in communication, outbreak modeling, and global health security preparedness.

When public health is neglected, it costs lives.

Finally, during my time at ARPA-H, I led efforts to develop high-risk, high-reward breakthroughs in AI technologies, regenerative medicine, cancer diagnostics, and healthcare tools to support rural areas.

Health technology innovation is America's next frontier: by investing in innovators and entrepreneurs, we will save lives and drive economic growth. But these advancements will only be effective if we also invest in the public health infrastructure that enables them to be utilized on a population scale. What good is a potentially life-saving discovery if there is no translation to make it usable?

That's where CDC plays a vital role. Outbreaks are only getting more frequent. Ebola and MPOX in Africa, MERS in the Middle East, Zika and Oropouche in South America, and now H5N1 avian influenza across nearly every continent. These threats are in our backyard or always just a flight away. CDC must be fully prepared to defend the

American people from these known biological risks and as importantly, be prepared to defend against those we have not seen yet.

If confirmed I will focus CDC on three top priorities:

First, restoring trust.

I will rebuild credibility by making CDC leadership more public-facing and accountable. I will improve data transparency, with a focus on protecting patient privacy and security. I will ensure all recommendations are backed by publicly available, gold standard science.

Second, strengthening public health infrastructure.

We must invest in innovation to prevent, detect, and respond to threats. I will prioritize near real-time, situational awareness to detect outbreaks early. I will prioritize bringing state of the art technologies to CDC, including the labs and diagnostic development. I will work with State and local public health officials to help build a modernized public health infrastructure across the country. I will also support a precision, preventive health operational model to offer tailored health strategies to meet the needs of all Americans.

Third, rapid, evidence-based, response.

We know the next outbreak is not a matter of if, but rather when. I have learned firsthand - crises demand clear plans and decisive action. I will implement tested, evidence-informed, pre-defined protocols to avoid confusion and delays, and strengthen risk communication so the public receives timely, consistent guidance based in fact, not fear.

These priorities support the President's and Secretary's vision of a healthier America. To achieve them, I will lead with integrity, transparency, and purpose, and work with Congress to maximize health outcomes and protect the American people.

Thank you for your time and for considering my nomination. I am happy to answer any questions.