



Hearing on “China’s Evolving Healthcare Ecosystem: Challenges and Opportunities”

Thursday, May 7, 2020
Washington, DC

Opening Statement of Chairman Cleveland

Good afternoon, and welcome to the fourth hearing of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission’s 2020 reporting cycle. Today’s hearing will examine new developments in China’s healthcare system, the opportunities they potentially create for U.S. researchers and companies, and the challenges these pose to continued U.S. leadership in the medical sciences. I want to welcome our witnesses and thank them for their participation.

This hearing comes at a critical juncture. When we began planning for this hearing, COVID was a largely localized problem in Wuhan. We wanted to focus on China’s overhaul of its domestic healthcare system, improvements in the training of skilled health care workers, and the delivery of basic healthcare services which have contributed to measurable progress in mortality rates and quality of life. We had every expectation of drawing attention to China’s collaboration with global experts after the SARS outbreak in 2003 and its commitment to building robust monitoring systems to strengthen early identification and remediation of variations of flu and new types of pneumonia.

As we gather today to discuss the development of China’s healthcare system, COVID-19 has claimed the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. The global economy and citizens around the world are paying a crushing price due to the lack of transparency and accountability by China’s leaders. Regrettably, under General Secretary Xi Jinping, China’s political climate has become increasingly intolerant of dissent and suppresses any news that reflects poorly on the CCP leadership. This tightening of control distorts policy and decision making in the best of times; with COVID-19 the outcome has been catastrophic, not just for China but for the entire world.

During the early stages of the outbreak, doctors were silenced, officials destroyed case samples, and the government suppressed or delayed public disclosure of key information about the outbreak. Despite its early and continued mismanagement of the crisis, Beijing has cynically exploited the disruption and attempted to bolster its international influence and spread disinformation around the world.

Beijing’s behavior during the current pandemic reflects its broader approach to engagement with the United States on healthcare issues. Whether we look at biomedical research collaboration, participation in each other’s healthcare markets, or cooperation on public health issues, the Chinese government has pursued a well worn path of subsidies, stonewalling and stealing which undermine market access and compromise improvements in the health and well being of both the citizens of China and U.S. If the United States is to retain its position as a global leader in medical sciences, continue to innovate and create life saving treatments and devices, and ensure that the healthcare data of our citizens are used for

purposes that align with U.S. values and interests, we must develop a new course for engaging with China. I hope our witnesses today can shed light on China's healthcare policy objectives and offer recommendations on how the United States can more effectively manage its relationship with China in the healthcare domain.

I would also like to thank the Senate Recording Studio and its staff for helping us conduct this hearing virtually. Let me now turn to my co-chair for this hearing, Commissioner Thea Lee.