**Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review of the United States**

**Fifth Video: Dorothy Fink, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

* Thank you.  My name is Dorothy Fink and I am the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Women’s Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
* I am honored to talk to you about the importance of health to the U.S. government, and what we are doing to help people who live in the United States live healthy lives.
* I’d like to respond to questions about COVID-19 and what we are doing to address higher rates of mortality and morbidity in minority populations.
* HHS is invested in improving our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 in minority populations who are often at higher risks for contracting the virus.
* Some of the immediate steps underway to reduce disparities include: providing more accessible and affordable testing and treatment options; strengthening effective communication to minority communities; tailoring guidance for individuals and communities most at risk and expanding telehealth options to increase access to care.
* HHS invested $40 million in the development and coordination of a strategic network of national, state, territorial, tribal and local organizations to improve and provide effective communication. This will include culturally competent information in multiple languages.
* Turning now to concerns about the evolving opioid crisis and suicide rates in the United States. Our administration has taken numerous measures to address these serious issues, including the coordination of opioid-related activities through the White House Opioid Cabinet.
* HHS launched a Five-Point Strategy (Strategy) to combat opioid abuse, misuse, and overdose.
* The evidence-based Strategy provides the overarching framework for the Department and aims to: improve access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services; strengthen data to inform real-time public health response; advance the practice of pain management practices; target availability and distribution of overdose-reversing medications; and support cutting-edge research that advances our understanding of pain and addiction.
* In FY 2019 alone, HHS awarded more than $4.26 billion in grants to states, tribes, and local communities through programs aimed at addressing the tenets of the Strategy.
* And through new and expanded authorities granted by the passage of the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act, HHS was able to further expand the scope and effectiveness of our programs.
* These efforts have led to important accomplishments for the administration: an increase in the number of people receiving medication-assisted treatment, an increase in the number of providers able to prescribe medication-assisted treatment, and a 495% increase in naloxone prescriptions since January 2017.
* The SUPPORT Act has been instrumental in enhancing our work across all elements of our Strategy, allowing HHS to continue investing resources towards addressing this crisis.
* These results are a testament to the administration’s prioritization of the opioid crisis, especially as it continues to evolve and impact so many lives.
* Suicide is a serious public health issue closely associated with substance use, misuse and abuse.  Through the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), which implements the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](https://store.samhsa.gov/product/National-Strategy-for-Suicide-Prevention-2012-Goals-and-Objectives-for-Action/PEP12-NSSPGOALS), the administration is working to ensure continued advancements in suicide prevention infrastructure and capacity building in local communities.
* I will now discuss women’s health.
* HHS promotes women’s health in a variety of ways, including funding an office solely dedicated to women’s health policy.
* HHS provides $286 million annually in grants to public and private organizations that offer a broad range of family planning methods and services primarily to those from low income families.
* In addition, legislation passed in 2018 expanded the Safe Motherhood Initiative within the HHS, including authorizing support for state and tribal Maternal Mortality Review Committees.  HHS is now funding 25 states to conduct Maternal Mortality Review.
* The Protecting Life in Global Health Policy, in effect since May 2019, focuses the international discourse toward achieving four main pillars:  One- better health for women, two- the preservation of human life at all stages, three- strengthening the family as foundational to any healthy society, and four- protecting every nation’s national sovereignty in global politics.
* In October 2020, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and HHS Secretary Alex Azar participated in the virtual signing of the Geneva Consensus Declaration, a historic document that further strengthens a growing coalition around these four pillars.  The document was co-sponsored by the United States, Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, and Uganda, and co-signed by 33 countries in total, representing more than 1.6 billion people.