

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Finance Committee Mark-Up of RFK Jr. Nomination for HHS Secretary

February 4th, 2025

Sen. Cantwell Remarks

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Mr. Chairman, thank you. When you said two or three people, I didn't know who you had in mind. But being next in seniority, I appreciate the opportunity.

Today is very concerning to me, because of the future of what I think our nation faces.

When I think of this issue, I think of my Pacific Northwest leadership, how Paul Allen, on his own, invested \$100 million to fight Ebola. I think of Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation, not just trying to eradicate polio and work on these issues, but to think of a regime that helps not just our nation's health, but global health.

So with the UW, the University of Washington, the Cancer Research Center, all of these entities are a collaboration of saying we have to go faster in solving these threats to our nation as it relates to health.

Now we can have a big discussion, which, I think you guys all want to have a big discussion about whether, and when, what happened in the Wuhan province. But I can tell you we were the first city, we had the first patient, we had the first people who died in nursing homes, we had an emergency room at a hospital who basically was just begging for any equipment we could get them.

The whole community stood up and moved as fast as we possibly could and broke down barriers to save lives, and that is what we have to continue to do on innovation. We cannot let another country get ahead of us on some sort of warfare issue, and not have a response when it comes to a vaccine.

So the most challenging – I wanted to vote for Mr. Kennedy in the context of my family's history. My dad stood behind his father the night his father gave the famous speech. I told him in my office, in my family, the Kennedys stood up.

But when he answered Senator Cassidy's question, and he couldn't even give him the answer, that yes, the data is there to support vaccines today, I don't need any more data, all of a sudden, I saw this world that we got affected by in Seattle: not being stood up for.

I need someone at HHS who is going to say we are going to be a leader in medical technology, science, vaccines, we are going to fight foreign powers, we are going to be there to provide global health.

And I don't want a recalcitrant. I need a leader. And that is why I'm voting no.