The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) political staff have routinely pursued anti-science and anti-abortion policies and actions. Using rhetoric pulled directly from far-right and anti-abortion groups, HHS political appointees have disrupted effective and important research, putting scientific advancement at risk. One such example is research using fetal tissue, where focus from anti-abortion groups has resulted in actions and policy goals that fail the real needs of the American public.

**Halting Critical Research**

In September 2018, HHS cancelled a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) fetal tissue procurement contract and opened an audit of all federally-funded research that relies on fetal tissue after pressure from dozens of anti-choice and faith-based groups. The contract was to enable research on immune response to medications.

**Threatening to Cancel Essential HIV Research**

In December 2018, HHS informed the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) that they were ending a seven-year contract midstream, with the decision coming from the highest levels. This project was utilizing fetal tissue in research to test “virtually all HIV therapies subsequently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration since the 1990s.” Dr. Greene, the HIV researcher, said the moves are jeopardizing critical science.

**Holding Sham “Listening Sessions”**

In November and December 2018, HHS held “listening sessions” with stakeholders, including anti-abortion groups, scientific associations and patient advocacy organizations, to discuss the continuation of federally-funded research using fetal tissue. Led by Assistant Secretary Brett Giroir, who previously assured Rep. Mark Meadows in writing that HHS is “fully committed to prioritizing, expanding, and accelerating efforts to develop and implement the use of these alternatives” and portrayed HHS at “Pro-life and pro-science,” these meetings were clearly an attempt to bolster the ideological and anti-science policy goals of administration appointees.

**Congressional Hearing on “Alternatives” to Fetal Tissue**

In December 2018, the Republican-held House Oversight Committee held a hearing on alternatives to fetal tissue, though the vast consensus among scientists is that none exist today. The Majority’s witnesses were from the Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research arm of the anti-abortion Susan B. Anthony List, and used ideological rhetoric that echoed language directly from HHS political officials.