

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**Finance Committee Hearing with RFK Jr.**

**September 4, 2025**

**Sen. Cantwell Opening Remarks**

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

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following up on the same line as Senator Cassidy, because that's exactly -- I represent one of the most science-based states in the country, that is percentage of scientists per capita. And at your confirmation hearing, we asked about this, whether you would follow science. You've made a statement here today in your testimony that you would follow science, and yet you are not following science, and that was what Senator Cassidy's question was. It's a simple yes or no answer, do you think the President deserves to get a prize for Warp Speed and the mRNA technology that saved so many lives, and you won't answer that question.

**Kennedy:** I answered it.

**Sen. Cantwell:** No, you are saying that there are problems with what was interpreted. You can say yes --

**Kennedy:** I said the president deserves a Nobel Prize. But the mRNA vaccines that we're working on, the ones we canceled, which are for upper respiratory infections alone --

**Sen. Cantwell:** You canceled \$500 million of research, because the mRNA technology is about continuing the research to be ready for the next influenza, the next pandemic, and you have to do the research --

**Kennedy:** I'm happy to have a detailed discussion with you about it. You are so wrong on your facts.

**Sen. Cantwell:** You're interrupting me, and sir, you're a charlatan. That's what you are. You're the ones who conflate chronic disease with the need for vaccines.

The history on vaccines is very clear. This is the 20th century. That's how many people had vaccines and had illnesses.

This is the 21st century. This is the decrease. 99% down to 100%. This is what was delivered with vaccines. And you don't want to support that. You don't want to support that evidence. So yes, the governors of the West -- Washington, Oregon, and California -- will take up the efficacy of science.

Yes, the University of Washington will deliver the science that America will depend on, because you don't want to depend on it. And his own Surgeon General of the Trump Administration said over 2 million lives were saved because the mRNA technology, and you don't want to continue that. You don't want to continue that technology.

So, what country is now going to take up that technology lead? What country is going to do that? Leaving us more vulnerable to some other country keeping the advantage on having the best technology.

So, I'm telling you I represent a state that's about technology. I have two other quick questions for you --

**Kennedy:** Are these questions or statements, because I can answer that question if it's actually a question.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Do you believe in having the ACA and the support for the ACA that is about to expire? Do you believe in doing something about that?

**Kennedy:** In terms of the advance of the enhanced premium tax credits?

**Sen. Cantwell:** Yes.

**Kennedy:** The Democrats had two chances to make them permanent, and they didn't. And they didn't for a reason.

**Sen. Cantwell:** We're the ones who delivered it. So, I'm just asking yes or no, do you want to do something about this? Yes or no.

**Kennedy:** I want to fix the system, and that's what we're doing, fixing systematically to make premiums lower. That's what President Trump wants to do.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Do you think the women on the steps of the Capitol were a hoax yesterday?

**Kennedy:** I don't know about any women on the steps of the steps of the Capitol yesterday.

**Sen. Cantwell:** The women who were talking about Epstein. Do you think they were a hoax yesterday?

**Kennedy:** Do I think they were--?

**Sen. Cantwell:** Do you think they were [perpetuating] a hoax yesterday?

**Kennedy:** Perpetuating a hoax?

**Sen. Cantwell:** Yeah.

**Kennedy:** I have no idea what they were saying. This the first I'm hearing about.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Your first that you're hearing about the women on the Capitol steps saying that they believe that the Epstein information should be made public? That's the first you're hearing about it?

What I'm saying is you are perpetrating hoaxes. *You* as the secretary of health, so you're undermining the whole health care delivery system, and you keep trying to point to chronic disease. But you're not putting solutions on the table to cover more Americans, and you're taking away the science and technology that has made us the leader, that has saved, according to the first Trump Administration Surgeon General, millions of lives! And you don't want to keep that going!

So no, I don't support your continued efforts as Secretary, and I definitely think that our colleagues need to rally around science. If you want the Northwest to just continue to lead on all innovation and all healthy people. Okay, we'll do that, but it's a sad statement for the rest of America and America's leadership on technology.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.