

By Congressman David Price in Holly Springs, NC -

Good morning. It's always a pleasure to join with the Governor, Secretary Crisco, our senators, other community leaders, and members of our world-class, high-tech workforce for occasions such as this. Fortunately, we've had a good many such events lately, but I think we would agree that this one is extraordinary!

I've been remembering the excitement and promise we felt when we broke ground on this spot just more than four years ago. Now, after a complex construction process and months of testing and monitoring, we are here to mark the launching of the facility's mission: attaining pandemic readiness as the first cell culture and adjuvant influenza vaccine manufacturing facility here in the United States.

This facility is further proof that the Triangle and North Carolina lead the way in developing innovative biotech products and creating the type of jobs needed to compete in the world economy.

This facility also will play a key role in strengthening our nation's defenses against pandemic disease by producing new vaccine platforms that will enable us to respond effectively to unanticipated outbreaks as well as conventional public health threats.

As the ranking member of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I can attest to the importance of this role as we work to improve our biopreparedness at the national level.

North Carolina is emerging as a national leader in this effort. For example, UNC-Chapel Hill is spearheading a demonstration program of national importance with NC State University, SAS Institute, and other partners. NCB-Prepared will provide an early warning capacity at and beyond the intake points of our health system. A reconstruction of the data surrounding the H1N1 outbreak in 2009 shows that with NCB-Prepared the warnings signs could have been picked up some two months earlier, informing our prevention and preparedness efforts.

Today, we are also reminded of a key lesson of the Research Triangle's success story. The positive business climate we have created, the spirit of innovation and collaboration we have fostered, have been the products of a close and constructive partnership between the public and private sectors—investing in public education and community college training, keeping our infrastructure up to speed, and fostering a robust research enterprise.

A company like Novartis could have located this facility anywhere in our country. We are deeply grateful that it has chosen the Triangle, but we are also confident this will prove to be a wise choice. Many who have facilitated this process are in this room—town, county, and state officials and staffs, and leaders from the business community—and we commend and thank all of you.

I was happy to work with Novartis, other North Carolina companies, and colleagues in Congress to secure funding over the last few years for pandemic influenza preparedness at BARDA and other federal agencies. Much of this funding went directly and indirectly into the building of this manufacturing plant, creating and maintaining essential jobs while addressing a vital national health need.

We appreciate Novartis' commitment to North Carolina and the Triangle and we applaud its commitment to treating patients, easing suffering, and enhancing the quality of life for people around the world. We appreciate the team effort that encouraged and reinforced Novartis' fortuitous selection of Holly Springs as the site of this plant. Our celebration is genuine, but as is often the case on such occasions, it is combined with an awareness of the challenges that lie ahead and a determination to take them on together.