

**Testimony to the United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy**

**Hearing: "Seresto Flea and Tick Collars: Examining Why a Product Linked to  
More than 2,500 Pet Deaths Remains on the Market"**

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Chairman Krishnamoorthi, Ranking Member Cloud, and Members of the Committee thank you for inviting me to appear today.

My name is Carrie Sheffield, and I am a senior policy analyst at the Center for Economic Opportunity at Independent Women's Forum. We are a nonprofit organization, committed to increasing the number of women who value free markets and personal liberty. We advance policies that enhance people's freedom, opportunities, and well-being. My work focuses on expanding opportunities for women.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to acknowledge the witnesses on the earlier panel. Their stories of losing beloved pets, who are family members in nearly every sense of the word, break our hearts. As someone who grew up with beloved dogs and cats in our family, I know how the unconditional love from our family pets is wonderful and lifegiving. If only we all could be half the human beings our pets believe us to be.

My understanding is that this Subcommittee launched its investigation into the collars in early March 2021, following the publication of an investigative report about possible injuries and deaths related to this dog collar. What I believe is so heartbreaking about this particular case is that it appears that we are now almost a year and a half since this initial discovery, yet we don't have this issue resolved.

We are hearing from both sides about this issue. No matter what is decided here today, this is clearly a case of government regulatory failure to provide clarity to the American people, and our vulnerable, furry friends.

This lack of clarity on pet collars is part of a widespread pattern of limited clarity throughout government. We're seeing it at the FDA in protecting our baby formula supply chain, which is so critical for millions of families. And on top of all that, women nationwide are also reporting a shortage of tampons.

Sadly, what's happening right now is what some commentators are calling "The Great Distrust." We see in many instances, Americans have lost their confidence in our political leaders and our institutions, from the EPA to the FBI and Congress to public

education, the CDC and more. We see this lack of confidence in last week's overwhelming recall of San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin, who refused to protect citizens and favored criminality over justice. What's telling is that reports indicate people of color rejected Boudin at higher rates than white voters. They know that defunding the police widens economic inequality by destroying the safety of businesses in minority communities. These black and brown voters, whose businesses and physical safety suffer most under a "Defund The Police" ethos, endorsed by some members of your subcommittee, stood up and pushed back. They want to believe their cities are institutions that care for their safety, their small businesses and, most importantly, their lives.

According to your website, the House Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy has jurisdiction over the following areas: income inequality and policies that affect the growth and prosperity of the middle class, including education, housing, labor, trade, small business, agriculture; securities regulation; consumer protection; private sector information technology security, policy, and management; intellectual property; telecommunications; and federal acquisition policy unrelated to national security and information technology.

Your last subcommittee hearing was held June 23, 2021 on youth e-cigarette use. As mentioned previously, while my heart goes out to any pet owners that have lost a pet over the last 10 years (during the scope of purported review), besides dog collars and vaping, there are a host of widespread problems plaguing the country that fall under the jurisdictional scope of the subcommittee. These vital issues have not been discussed to date.

If this committee was paying attention to the issues the American people are truly struggling with, it would have multiple hearings on how 40-year high inflation is making it hard for Americans to buy basic necessities and small business owners to make ends meet. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index report for May 2022, prices for the purchase of pets, pet supplies, and accessories rose 7.1% year over year, with pet food costs rising 9.1%. Part of ensuring pet security, as this committee is discussing today, is ensuring pet food security. Tragically, we've seen in the news that rising inflation costs for pets is forcing some people to surrender their animals to animal shelters.

In addition to caring for pets, besides just sending a letter to formula manufacturers, this committee should have also held a hearing regarding the baby formula shortage. Parents of newborns and babies face the dual hardship of an unprecedented baby formula shortage concurrently with rising prices on baby formula. An estimated 43% of baby formula inventory last month was out of stock nationally, according to Datasembly, a company tracking supply in real time. That is up from 18% at the start of 2022 and 3% from the same time in 2021.

Three out of four babies below the age of six months in the U.S. consume baby formula, some have dietary restrictions that require a specialized formula. This has placed many families in the vulnerable position of making desperate social media pleas to find a

nutrition source for their little ones. This new economic crisis is one of life or death for the youngest members of our society.

In addition to baby formula, this subcommittee should shine a spotlight on the gas prices that are pummeling American families with record prices recorded daily. This subcommittee should also move to stop the Securities and Exchange Commission from creating red tape that inhibits new market entrants. This red tape will further constrain our supply chain.

Given The Great Distrust, it should be no surprise that Consumer Sentiment plummeted in June to the lowest level *ever recorded* in the 70-year history of the [University of Michigan index](#). It is a stunning figure, lower than what we saw in the tumultuous days of the COVID-19 pandemic. The index fell to 50.2 from 58.4 in May — already a recession-level reading — and was far below the 58.1 projected by economists.

The so-called experts promised us that overall inflation peaked, but again they're wrong. After falling slightly to 8.3% in April from 8.5% in March, inflation spiked back up again in May to 8.6%, [according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

That includes rising prices for gas — now an all-time, nationwide, [average high of more than \\$5 a gallon](#) — and [higher housing costs](#), [pricier groceries](#) and [airfare](#). The energy index rose 34.6% over the last year and the food index increased 10%, [the largest 12-month increase since the period ending March 1981](#). This after the U.S. economy shrank by 1.5% in the first quarter of 2022.

It's no wonder that the World Bank [issued a recent economic warning](#), predicting the global economy will grow 2.9% this year, a steep dive from the 5.7% growth in 2021 and from the 4.1% that the World Bank projected for this year in January. It warned of the possibility of “stagflation,” a combination of high inflation and tepid economic growth.

The World Bank projected that oil prices would spike 42% this year and non-energy commodity prices to increase nearly 18%, though it did forecast that oil and other commodity prices would drop 8% in 2023.

What is this subcommittee's plan to stop this troubling stagflation? The American people would like to know. President Joe Biden outlined his response in a [shift-the-blame Wall Street Journal op-ed](#) laying primary responsibility on the Federal Reserve, whose members have been woefully unaware of how bad inflation would get. President Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held that inflation was “temporary” or “transitory.” They made the case for additional stimulus spending through a multi-trillion dollar package of domestic spending priorities and denied the connection between inflation and federal policy.

President Biden also says he wants to lower gas prices on one hand while his administration does all it can to block new U.S. production of oil and natural gas — all in the name of chasing a socialist Green New Deal.

Most Americans didn't believe the inflation "experts" and instead they expect inflation to get worse, according to [a new poll from The Washington Post and George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government](#).

Nearly 9 in 10 Americans say they've started bargain-hunting for cheaper products, the Post reported, and "about three-quarters are cutting back on restaurants and entertainment or putting off planned purchases." That's what Americans do. When our leaders fail us, we adapt.

As COVID-related disruptions to in-person learning have finally dissipated, working parents have the certainty to seek out employment. The tight labor market has rewarded them with rising wages and increased flexible work opportunities. But these rising wages have all been consumed by inflation, such that nationwide, Americans across the board have experienced a *pay cut* ever since this Congress adopted a \$1.9 trillion spending package in the spring of 2021. That was also in addition to the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure spending package adopted in the previous fall.

Americans are deeply worried about inflation and the state of the economy. Some 94% of voters are concerned or upset about inflation, according to a recent Washington Post-ABC News poll. This is the top concern for Americans.

Voters do not think that Washington has the right answers. Some 47% of people said the president's policies to get inflation under control were "hurting," compared with only 22%, who said they were "helping."

Americans are stuck inside of a wage-price spiral due to an acute labor shortage. Wages and benefits rose 4.5% in the first quarter compared to the year before, the fastest increase since at least 2001, financial analyst Liz Peek recently [reported](#). Given there are 11.3 million job openings, but fewer than 6 million people looking for work, this spiral is likely to continue and pass costs onto consumers.

The Federal Reserve also plays a key role in tamping down inflation, but rather than put a seasoned inflationary expert on that body, the Senate recently gave Lisa Cook a seat on the Fed. Cook is a divisive figure who embraces racial essentialism, including critical race theory and reparations. Unfortunately, she'll likely push the Fed to pursue a divisive, ineffective racial justice agenda that demands equality of outcomes rather than equality of opportunity. This is not the Fed's mission, and keeping the inflation rate low and stable is tough. Cook's socialist lens is the opposite of what America needs to slay the inflation dragon.

So while this subcommittee today is meeting to discuss an important topic of pet collar safety, the American people want your legislative body to understand that American households across the board are hurting in multiple other areas and are not receiving the attention they deserve. Americans want solutions that will increase purchasing power and allow them to enjoy their wage gains and flexibility. Congress should focus on solutions that actually increase the supply of goods and services and reduce elevated demand to tackle inflation in a meaningful way.