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STATEMENT OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, SECOND DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND, TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH OF THE HOUSE INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN COMMERCE COMMITTEE RELATING TO ORAL POLIO VACCINE.

I am prompted by the experience of the serious polio epidemic in Rhode Island last summer to offer the hope that your subcommittee will take favorable action on President Kennedy's proposal relating to oral polio vaccine. By making it possible for the Public Health Service to purchase this vaccine at the earliest possible moment, as the President suggested, we may avert polio epidemics in 1961.

Oral vaccine is believed to provide some protection immediately after it is taken whereas the Salk vaccine takes ten days to two weeks to start to build immunity. Moreover, because oral vaccine is easy to give and pleasant to take, it would be possible for everyone, even in a large city like Providence, to be vaccinated in a few days. To give protection by Salk vaccine to such a large population would take weeks.

For these reasons, I believe that if the program proposed to you now had been in existence last summer, Rhode Island could have stopped its epidemic and saved children from a lifetime handicap. As it was, many people were exposed to the disease before they were vaccinated even though great effort was made to get everyone vaccinated as quickly as possible.

There is little likelihood that another epidemic will strike Rhode Island this summer. Our people learned, the hard way, the importance of advance protection. But there is every likelihood that polio will strike other communities this summer because more than 85 million susceptible Americans have not yet had three or more doses of the Salk vaccine.

While I realize that there would be no epidemics if all these unvaccinated and partially vaccinated got their Salk vaccine this spring, I also know that some of them will fail to act until polio strikes near home and

then near panic prevails. Since the chief victims will be babies and small children, it seems to me imperative that the Government be prepared to do whatever it can to protect them.

With an epidemic reserve of oral vaccine, the Public Health Service could rush supplies to any community at the first sign of an impending epidemic. If the theory that oral vaccine can stop an epidemic almost instantly proves correct, thousands will be saved from lifetime crippling.

The one million dollars this measure will cost is a low price to pay to save lives and to curb the epidemics of polio that continue to occur every summer in certain States. Each summer it is different States that have this frightening experience.