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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on SSA, HHS and Treasury Nominees
As Prepared for Delivery

This morning the Finance Committee meets to consider three nominations: Jason Fichtner is nominated to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board, Sarah Arbes is nominated to serve as HHS Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Kipp Kranbuhl is nominated to serve as Assistant Treasury Secretary for Financial Markets.

I'll have just a few brief remarks on these nominees. If confirmed, Mr. Fichtner will dive into important work the Social Security Advisory Board is doing with respect to customer service and IT. The Board is also working hard to address challenges that come with serving some of the most vulnerable Social Security beneficiaries, individuals who are unable to manage their own finances.

If confirmed, Mr. Kranbuhl will take on a job at the Treasury Department that deals with a lot of tough subjects including debt management, housing finance and the stability of our financial markets.

Both are important roles that can affect the well-being of millions of Americans. They call for an even-handed approach from individuals willing to work with people from all sides. I hope these nominees serve in that manner.

Finally, Sarah Arbes is nominated to serve in a role at HHS that involves working directly with the Congress as the department's chief point of contact between us. One of our top priorities on this committee, for example, is bringing down the cost of prescription drugs. This committee also takes its oversight role very seriously. That means we've sent oversight letters to HHS on a variety of topics, including the appalling treatment of migrant children and families at our southern border, and the waste of taxpayer dollars on public relations contracts for the head of CMS.

At times, it has been awfully hard to get HHS to respond to our oversight inquiries. I understand that there's been some recent progress on the committee's bipartisan investigation of children's shelters, and I'm thankful for that. But to my mind, it's consistently been much harder than it needs to be to get the information that this committee and its members need to carry out our oversight responsibilities. This committee has worked closely and productively with Ms. Arbes in the past, so we're going to count on her to help turn that around. But make no mistake, there needs to be improvement in how HHS responds to this committee. My expectation is that HHS will provide the remaining information over the next several days. If that is the case, I will support moving this nomination forward.

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