

**Crapo Statement at Mental Health Hearing**  
*February 8, 2022*

**Washington, D.C.**--U.S. Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, delivered the following remarks at a hearing entitled, "Protecting Youth Mental Health: Part I - An Advisory and Call to Action."

*The text of Ranking Member Crapo's remarks, as prepared, is below.*

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Dr. Murthy, for being here today.

"This discussion comes at a crucial time. Our nation is confronting an unprecedented range of challenges, many of which have serious implications for the mental health of all Americans--especially children.

"From school closures to lockdowns and other COVID-related restrictions, the pandemic has intensified feelings of social isolation, helplessness and anxiety. Since the pandemic began, we have witnessed alarming spikes in suicide attempts and suicidal ideation among teenagers, along with a staggering rise in drug overdose deaths.

"Dr. Murthy, as you noted in your Advisory, rates of psychological distress among young people appear to have increased across the board in the past few years. Unfortunately, even prior to COVID-19, many of these trends pointed in the wrong direction.

"That said, I share your sense of optimism in tackling the urgent issues at hand. In communities across the country, we have seen families, faith leaders, policymakers and health care providers come together to craft creative and sustainable mental health prevention, access and treatment solutions.

"Thanks to the Chairman's leadership, we have the opportunity to bolster these efforts through a bipartisan process to advance targeted, consensus-driven and fiscally responsible policies that drive better outcomes for all Americans. By focusing on shared priorities and adhering to core guiding principles, this process can culminate in comprehensive legislation that our colleagues across the political spectrum will enthusiastically support.

"Building consensus will maximize our ability to see the work we conduct here signed into law. We must also uphold fiscal integrity, fully paying for any and all provisions we look to enact.

"As working families across the nation contend with the highest inflation in forty years, strained finances pose a grave threat to health care access. Unrestrained government spending risks pushing inflation even higher--further accelerating the decline of Americans' purchasing power.

“Moreover, with each passing year, we are steadily moving closer to the Medicare Trust Fund’s exhaustion date, at which time the program will no longer be able to pay full benefits for our nation’s seniors. We must be thoughtful and cautious to avoid exacerbating the fiscal challenges we face.

“Likewise, we must ensure any pay-fors that we advance do not in any way compromise economic growth, undermine biomedical innovation or undercut our recovery. Across-the-board bipartisan support will prove essential. By aligning our process with these basic principles and guardrails, we can produce a meaningful bill, carefully tailored to meet the challenges that confront us.

“This Committee has a strong track record of generating consensus-based bills, from the Chronic Care Act to the Retirement Enhancement and Security Act, which ultimately passed as the SECURE Act in 2019. I truly believe we can replicate that success here.

“As the Committee begins its work, we do so having built a strong foundation of shared interests and objectives. For instance, the pandemic has highlighted the pressing need for expanded access to telehealth, especially for Medicare beneficiaries.

“Our Committee took an essential first step toward addressing these barriers by codifying permanent Medicare coverage for mental health services, regardless of geographic location, including services provided in the home. However, gaps remain, and we will work to bridge them here.

“Strengthening the mental and behavioral health workforce will also prove vital, especially in the face of widespread provider stress, fatigue and burnout, which the pandemic has escalated. I hear every day from doctors, nurses and other health care professionals across Idaho who are looking to reduce hours or leave their practices entirely in the months to come, confronted with an unprecedented range of demands.

“Too often, sadly, policymakers have inadvertently added to these challenges, imposing bureaucratic requirements and tasks that divert attention from patient care and hinder providers’ workplace wellness. As we navigate potential policy options, we should look to avenues for enhancing flexibilities, both for providers and for states, as they seek to improve and innovate across the continuum of care.

“These and other focal points, from encouraging service integration to promoting modernization, present opportunities for bipartisan discussions that will enable our health care system to serve all Americans more effectively.

“In that spirit, I look forward to your testimony, Dr. Murthy, and to a timely discussion of mental and behavioral health solutions.

“Thank you.”

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