

## **Crapo Statement at Mental Health Hearing**

*February 15, 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 II—Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Care."

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

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for joining us today as we discuss ways to respond to mental health challenges impacting children and adolescents across the country.

"According to recent reports from the CDC, the number of young people dealing with depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts has unfortunately risen during the pandemic, as social isolation has taken its toll on far too many children and adolescents. Although it appears the pandemic is subsiding and our return to normalcy may be imminent, we cannot ignore the lasting effects of the past two years on the social and emotional well-being of children.

"We should do all that we can, within our jurisdiction, to increase access to high-quality mental health services, and reduce the causes of delayed and forgone treatment. While mental health issues affect people of all ages, children's needs are often different from those of adults, necessitating carefully tailored solutions.

"As this Committee works in a bipartisan way to advance the conversation on mental health, we must not only identify the complexity and scope of the problems at hand, but also explore innovative, sustainable and concrete policy solutions. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to develop meaningful measures to meet some of the nation's mental health challenges, including by expanding access to telehealth services, supporting our mental health workforce, and better integrating physical and mental health care services.

"Children can—and often do—benefit from services delivered via telehealth. While we often focus our telehealth discussions on Medicare, where key access gaps and barriers remain, this Committee should also prioritize clarifying and expanding care delivery options for children covered by Medicaid, regardless of geographic location.

"Additionally, we should work to maintain a strong mental health workforce with the capacity to care for all who need services. These efforts will prove particularly crucial as health care professional burnout, steep regulatory demands, and other strains jeopardize long-term provider retention and capacity.

"We have clear opportunities for improvement at every level. I regularly hear from frontline providers, as well as state policymakers, seeking the flexibility to innovate and craft targeted, local solutions to the challenges facing their communities.

“Their ideas and input will play a critical role in this process, especially as we look to bridge gaps in care, better integrate physical and behavioral health services, and promote value-based payment models that put patients first. If structured effectively, these reforms could prove game-changing for populations of all ages, including young people.

“Finally, no conversation on mental health care reforms for children and young adults would be complete without input from those whom the policies intend to empower and support. To that end, Trace, thank you for your willingness to join us today to share your perspective.

“We have the opportunity to better support children, their families, and their providers, by enhancing mental health outcomes across the United States. Moreover, we can—and must—do so while honoring this Committee’s strong tradition of member-driven, bipartisan, and fiscally responsible legislative solutions.

“Thank you to our witnesses for agreeing to share their expertise from across the continuum of care. They have provided invaluable services during these unprecedented times, and I look forward to hearing their testimonies.”