

Opening Statement by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Finance Committee  
On the President's FY 2020 Budget  
Featuring HHS Secretary Alex Azar  
Thursday, March 14, 2019

Good morning. This hearing will come to order.

I want to welcome our witness, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Mr. Alex Azar.

I appreciate Secretary Azar coming before the committee to talk about the health and human services proposals in President Trump's budget for fiscal year 2020.

Congress decides how much the government spends and how to allocate those resources.

But the President gets to have a say, and it's our duty to consider those recommendations.

We're here today to discuss the Trump Administration's recommendations for HHS programs.

These programs impact the day-to-day lives of many people in Iowa and throughout the country.

Medicare and Medicaid cover health care for over 130 million people.

Human services programs administered by HHS help millions of families in need while promoting upward mobility.

The programs this committee oversees spend over \$1 trillion and take hundreds of millions of dollars to administer.

The President's budget proposal aims to tackle a number of pressing challenges.

It looks to get a better handle on the opioid epidemic and improve child welfare outcomes.

This Committee has been active on these issues and has a role in overseeing HHS' implementation of laws that Congress has passed in these areas.

The budget also strives to lower the high cost of prescription drugs.

I share that goal and look forward to working with my colleagues on this committee to find ways to make medications more affordable in Medicare and Medicaid while protecting taxpayers who fund these programs.

President Trump and Secretary Azar deserve tremendous credit for highlighting the need to reduce drug costs for patients. Their sustained efforts have helped to make big drug pricing policy changes possible.

The budget serves as a reminder that Congress needs to act to make sure Medicare and Medicaid are around for future generations. Putting these programs on a sustainable financial path while ensuring patients can get the care they need is hard work.

As I've said many times regardless of the issue, the legislative heavy-lifting needs to be done in a bipartisan manner to achieve a lasting solution.

This hearing provides an opportunity to talk about issues important to our constituents and country. So whether you agree or disagree with specific policy proposals in the budget, it's important that we engage with Secretary Azar on the issues.

I appreciate that Secretary Azar is here to perform the time-honored tradition of testifying on the budget, which enables us to execute our duty to consider the President's proposals. I look forward to a robust discussion.

With that, I recognize Ranking Member Wyden for his opening statement.