

**Crapo Statement at Hearing on HHS FY 2025 Budget**  
*March 14, 2024*

**Washington, D.C.**--U.S. Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Mike Crapo delivered the following remarks at a hearing on the President's fiscal year 2025 budget for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra.

*As prepared for delivery:*

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Secretary Becerra, for being here today.

"Over the course of the past year, the Finance Committee has taken bipartisan action to tackle a range of health care challenges, leveraging collaboration and consensus to advance commonsense solutions for seniors and working families.

"Our pharmacy benefit manager reforms would modernize Medicare's prescription drug benefits, driving down costs at the pharmacy counter and netting billions in savings for taxpayers.

"Moreover, the Committee's mental health proposals would build on previous efforts to shore up patient access to critical services, especially in rural communities.

"These policies received nearly unanimous support from across this dais, all through regular order.

"Your Department and its sub-agencies, Mr. Secretary, have offered essential technical assistance throughout these processes. That support has ensured alignment between our legislation and its intended goals, and I thank you for that.

"As we move forward, further action on these overdue, patient-focused proposals must become an urgent priority not just for our Committee, but also for the Administration.

"We have a responsibility to patients, community pharmacies and frontline health care providers to deliver on these commitments, regardless of policy differences on other fronts.

"The President's budget request, unfortunately, falls severely short of that aim. On prescription drug affordability, for instance, the document makes virtually no mention of the robust bipartisan, bicameral efforts to reform PBM practices, instead opting to double down on price control policies that polarize Members in both chambers.

"Bipartisan bills in the Senate and House would address unintended consequences spurred by the Inflation Reduction Act's pricing provisions, particularly for patients with rare diseases, who will likely see fewer treatment options under the law.

“Rather than embrace these avenues for viable reform, however, the budget seeks to expand the program’s scope, with no attempt at improved transparency, certainty or mitigation.

“Further, the President’s budget request affirms an overreaching mandate that will force more nursing homes to close their doors and result in less access to home and community-based services for Medicaid beneficiaries.

“This document highlights divisions and misses vital opportunities for productive, patient-driven partnerships with Congress.

“We will continue engaging with your Department on a host of health care hurdles that demand policymakers’ attention.

“You have rightly raised concerns, for instance, around the ongoing surge in medication shortages, including for life-saving therapies. The Chairman and I recently released a white paper outlining potential solutions to prevent and mitigate this crisis, and we look forward to working with HHS and CMS to develop legislation designed to achieve these goals.

“We also stand ready to partner on proposals aligned with the President’s Cancer Moonshot, including by ensuring that seniors can access innovations like multi-cancer early detection screening tests. Earlier this Congress, I joined Senator Bennet in reintroducing our bill to grant Medicare coverage for these technologies and bipartisan majorities in both chambers have joined as cosponsors.

“More broadly, while the Administration erred in rescinding regulations aimed at expediting access to medical breakthroughs, your Department could take a range of steps to restore patients’ trust in reliable coverage for medical devices, including by expanding and enhancing the proposed pathway that CMS published last year.

“Before closing, let me emphasize the importance of timely communication with respect to the cyber-attack on Change Healthcare.

“While your Department has recently taken steps to issue guidance and flexibilities to insurers, providers and contractors to mitigate the effects of the hack, the over two-week delay resulted in avoidable uncertainty.

“Already financially vulnerable rural hospitals and providers, with little to no cash reserves, required immediate action by the Administration to ensure payrolls could be met and services could continue without interruption.

“In the coming days and weeks, HHS should continue to update members and stakeholders on efforts to limit further disruption.

“We have an obligation to build on longstanding legacies of bipartisanship to bolster the clinician workforce, drive value-based care, improve broken payment systems and ensure long-term access to telehealth.

“With these joint goals in mind, thank you again for being here today, Mr. Secretary, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.”