

Crapo Statement at Hearing on Mental Health
March 30

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, "Behavioral Health Care When Americans Need It: Ensuring Parity and Care Integration."

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

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses, some of whom have come from across the country to testify before the Committee today.

"We have heard from providers across the continuum of care, government officials, and policy experts who have shared a range of thoughtful perspectives and recommendations. This is the fourth mental health hearing that the Committee has held this Congress. Despite diverse viewpoints on some policy questions, all have agreed on the profound importance of ensuring all Americans have access to high-quality mental health care services.

"Our country has experienced a challenging couple of years. Even as hospitalizations and deaths caused by COVID-19 continue to decline and stabilize in the United States, the pandemic will have lasting impacts on the nation's mental health. Lockdowns, school closures and other government restrictions led to social isolation, new and worsened cases of depression, and widespread anxiety. For many, the pandemic also resulted in tragic personal losses, worsening these and other mental health conditions.

"I have also heard from health care providers across Idaho, where the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic have further exacerbated professional burnout. Onerous regulatory burdens have caused many physicians and allied health professionals to retire early or reduce their hours. The resulting workforce shortage makes it more challenging for patients to access the mental health services they need.

"Studies have found that the prevalence of mental health illness is similar between rural and urban areas. Individuals living in rural and frontier areas often face significant barriers in accessing needed mental health services closer to home. On average, rural residents have to travel farther to receive services and providers are less likely to practice in these communities.

"While the pandemic has increased the pervasiveness of mental health concerns, it also led to innovative solutions that address these challenges, such as the expansion of telehealth services. Telehealth expands access in underserved rural areas, improves care coordination and integration, and provides more privacy to patients to combat stigma.

“While there is no easy solution, I am committed to working alongside my colleagues to tackle these challenges in a bipartisan and fiscally responsible way. We cannot simply throw more money at the problem and expect it to solve everything. Instead, we must focus on developing data-driven, innovative and creative solutions to address these challenges.

“I look forward to hearing from today’s panel on their ideas to ensure that Americans in need can access timely, high-quality mental health care services.

“Thank you.”