

Crapo Statement at Hearing on HHS Budget

April 5

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, "The President's Fiscal Year 2023 Health and Human Services Budget."

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

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

"Our federal health care programs face a range of pressing challenges, which demand serious solutions. Today's hearing provides a crucial opportunity to highlight both shared priorities and concerns with respect to the proposals put forth by the President.

"As part of the Cancer Moonshot initiative, the Administration has rightly acknowledged the value of multicancer early detection tests, which have the potential to boost the cancer survival rate while driving down costs. Earlier this Congress, I reintroduced bipartisan legislation to ensure Medicare coverage for these screening tools, and I look forward to working with you, Secretary Becerra, to move this bill across the finish line. The budget proposal's focus on mental health also offers potential for common ground.

"Unfortunately, other aspects of the Budget Request raise substantial questions. It is imperative that we work now to keep Medicare strong, not only for current enrollees, but also for future generations. The Medicare Trustees have repeatedly cautioned that the program's financial shortfalls will require legislative action, with the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund projected to reach insolvency in 2026.

"We have yet to receive this year's Trustees Report, but the President's Budget includes no proposals to shore up the Trust Fund's solvency. In fact, the document contains virtually no sources of Medicare savings at all, instead opting for a long list of coverage expansions, often with no cost estimates.

"Proposing dozens of new spending policies with no sense of their budgetary effects risks deepening the deficit and exacerbating inflation. A similar pattern persists for the Budget Request's Medicaid provisions, which would add billions in new spending without any meaningful cost-saving reforms.

"Compounding these onerous impacts, the budget includes a placeholder for a reckless tax-and-spending package, presumably the nearly \$5 trillion, House-passed Build Back Better Act, that was rejected on a bipartisan basis last year, and across this country. The government price controls, Obamacare subsidy hikes and other misguided policies included in that bill would intensify the hardships many Americans currently face.

"Under the package's price controls, we would inevitably see fewer cutting-edge treatments and cures, higher launch prices for new drugs and a drastic decline in

innovative R&D, handing the Chinese Communist Party a competitive edge. Long-term Obamacare subsidy expansions, meanwhile, would double down on skyrocketing federal spending and force taxpayers to fund coverage for Americans with six-figure salaries.

“These policies would worsen the economic outlook for working families. By continuing to push forward this problematic agenda, the proposed budget has missed a key opportunity to address urgent issues and needs.

“As states and health care providers across the country look to budget for the year ahead, uncertainty abounds. The complex layers of flexibilities and coverage mandates tied to the public health emergency necessitate clear and comprehensive communication and accounting, particularly as stakeholders attempt to map out the path to post-pandemic normalcy. Without greater transparency, both for Congress and for the nation, this process could prove unpredictable and needlessly costly.

“Coverage dynamics, for instance, will likely be volatile at the end of the public health emergency, yet this budget provides no plan for transitions in care.

“Last year’s \$1.9 trillion partisan spending bill suffered from poor planning and prioritization, with only around one percent of the package’s funding directed to vaccines and therapeutics.

“This year’s Budget Request provided a chance to chart a more thoughtful return to normalcy, continuity and fiscal responsibility. Disappointingly, the document does not rise to that occasion.

“Secretary Becerra, I look forward to engaging with you on these and other issues in the months ahead, particularly with respect to telehealth, which continues to enjoy broad bipartisan support.

“Thank you again for being here today, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.”