

**TESTIMONY OF ANDREA PALM
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
APRIL 15, 2021**

Thank you, Chairman Wyden. Ranking Member Crapo. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today as President Biden's nominee for Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. I want to thank Senator Tammy Baldwin for the kind introduction and for her work on behalf of the people of Wisconsin. And thank you to the members of this committee for considering my nomination. I've enjoyed the opportunity to speak with many of you individually.

I was born and raised in Star Lake, New York -- a town of about 1,000 people. When you grow up in a small town, you understand from a young age that *together* is the only way to get things done.

That sense of community was formative and is what led me to become a social worker. I spent my twenties as a caseworker, finding safe homes for children in crisis and working for people with behavioral health needs.

These experiences shaped the rest of my career. It was the children and families I worked with during this time that made me want to change the system and drew me to public policy and public service. The memories of these kids still motivate me today.

I've spent my entire career focused on health and human services policy and lifting up our most vulnerable communities. From my time in the Senate working on the HITECH Act to serving at HHS where I played a key role implementing the Affordable Care Act and negotiating bipartisan policies like the 21st Century Cures Act, and.

Most recently, I had the privilege of leading Wisconsin's Department of Health Services. I'm proud of the work I was able to accomplish in Wisconsin. There, we found ways to make progress on a bipartisan basis, expanding access to telehealth services and our innovative Children's Health Insurance Program, and improving delivery of the Departments' programs to better serve the people of Wisconsin.

And when the pandemic hit, we led with facts, science, and transparency to protect our communities. As every single state did, we faced obstacles. But we built a strong statewide response -- leveraging government assets and the expertise of the private sector -- to build stable testing and contact tracing programs, reach rural communities, and vaccinate Wisconsinites.

And it's working - Wisconsin is among the top states in vaccinating its residents.

When I was previously at HHS, then-Secretary Burwell would joke that if there was an issue that was going to require bipartisan cooperation, the team should give it to me. She called my portfolio the "common ground agenda." And if I have the honor of being confirmed and returning to HHS, that's what I'm bringing with me -- a common ground agenda:

First, we must end the COVID-19 pandemic. I know we can all agree we have lost far too many Americans to this virus. President Biden put forward ambitious goals and Congress has followed through providing the resources to get the job done.

If confirmed, I look forward to implementing the American Rescue Plan, getting vaccines in arms, rebuilding a public health workforce, and securing this nation's supply chain.

Second, we must expand access to high quality, affordable health care. The American Rescue Plan took major steps to bring down the cost of health care for working families, but we can't stop there.

We must strengthen our Medicare and Medicaid lifelines, reduce the cost of prescription drugs, better integrate mental health and substance use disorder treatment into our health care system, maintain our global leadership in research, development and innovation, and ensure that all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care.

Finally, we must prioritize human services. HHS has an important role to play – from caring for children, to advancing the health and well-being of people with disabilities, we must not lose sight of these core missions.

HHS faces big challenges. And it's our responsibility to be tireless stewards of an agency that touches nearly every aspect of American life.

To me, that's what public service is all about – making government work for the people. And leaving the country better than we found it.

I am ready for the task, and eager to continue serving. Thank you for considering my nomination.