

Crapo Statement at Hearing on Barriers to Mental Health Care
May 3, 2023

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, "Barriers to Mental Health Care: Improving Provider Directory Accuracy to Reduce the Prevalence of Ghost Networks."

As prepared for delivery:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

"Last Congress, this Committee came together to enact dozens of bipartisan policies to expand access to mental health care services. These reforms will increase the number of providers participating in Medicare and allow patients to receive care in more convenient locations, including through telehealth.

"However, in order for these improvements to achieve their potential, patients need accurate and up-to-date information on their health care options.

"I have long championed Medicare Advantage for its ability to offer patients choice and control over their health care. Through robust competition and innovative benefit offerings, Medicare Advantage provides consumer-focused health coverage to millions of Americans.

"As enrollment continues to grow, improving the accuracy of provider directories could further strengthen Medicare Advantage.

"The patient-provider relationship is the foundation of the health care system. Whether a patient is suffering a mental health crisis or just received a troubling diagnosis, directories should serve as crucial tools to help seniors across the country.

"While we work to better align incentives to improve provider directory accuracy, however, we must do so without increasing burdensome requirements that will only weaken our mental health workforce.

"Regulatory red tape and reimbursement strain, among other factors, can also decrease patient access, exacerbating physician shortages, compounding burnout, and eroding health care access and quality.

"Congress should build on the targeted relief measures we advanced last year, including temporary Physician Fee Schedule support and Medicare telehealth expansion, to address these issues on a bipartisan and sustainable basis.

"Physician payment stabilization and telehealth coverage for seniors have received strong support from Members of both parties and in both chambers. As we look to

enhance Medicare, we should prioritize these and other bipartisan goals, and we must do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

“I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about opportunities to streamline provider reporting requirements, empower patients with accurate information, and advance a more transparent health care system.”