

Crapo Statement at Hearing on HHS Budget
June 10, 2021

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 HHS's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget."

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

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The events of the past year have emphasized the importance of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Last year, the efforts of HHS and its sub-agencies ensured safe access to crucial health care services, even at the height of the pandemic, through telehealth expansion and other emergency flexibilities.

"HHS also proved pivotal in partnering with private-sector innovators to help bring several safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines to the public in record time.

"In the months ahead, the Administration should work with Congress to build on these successes, as well as to address some of the challenges the past year has created or exacerbated.

"Certain aspects of the President's Budget Request seem aligned with these aims.

"The proposal describes a concerted effort to build on our program integrity efforts to tackle waste, fraud and abuse, which harm taxpayers, patients and families.

"Program integrity represents a clear area of common ground.

"The Budget Request also highlights the importance of value-based care, which will prove indispensable as we work to lower health care costs while increasing care quality.

"Unfortunately, other aspects of the President's proposal raise serious questions and concerns.

"Medicare Trust Fund solvency remains a pressing crisis, jeopardizing benefits for tens of millions of seniors, and yet this Budget Request proposes no meaningful policies to contain unsustainable spending growth.

“In fact, apart from outlining trillions of dollars in tax increases and spending hikes, the budget proposal offers few policy details at all.

“Much of the blueprint focuses on vague references to agenda items, with no meaningful discussion of how to pay for them.

“These policies stray substantially from the promise of unity and bipartisanship initially advertised by this Administration.

“Proposals to lower the Medicare eligibility age, for example, would likely crowd out private coverage without moving the needle on access or affordability—all on the American taxpayer’s dime.

“The Budget Request also suggests using Medicare dollars to expand Obamacare, just as we saw with the original passage of the ACA more than a decade ago.

“Rather than champion the market-based reforms that have made Medicare Advantage and Part D such resounding success stories for our nation’s seniors, the budget proposes a convoluted price control scheme for prescription drugs that would reduce access to lifesaving cures in the years ahead.

“For the roughly four in ten seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans, the policies referenced in the Budget Request could also mean drastic cuts, which could jeopardize supplemental benefits like dental and vision.

“The document also affirms prioritization of \$400 billion to increase access to home and community-based services.

“Home and community-based services are a key lifeline for scores of Americans, and Congress should consider bipartisan policies to expand availability.

“This should include ensuring states have the workforce necessary to meet demand.

“Unfortunately, media reports suggest this \$400 billion may be used to establish certain labor reforms that fail to address the gaps in patient services states have experienced for decades.

“That being said, I am confident we can find areas of common ground and I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, to advance consensus-driven policies on a range of health care issues, from telehealth to value-based care.

“Mr. Secretary, it is good to see you again. I look forward to your testimony, and to discussing these and other vitally important issues with you today.”