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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing to Consider Treasury and HHS Nominations

As Prepared for Delivery

The Finance Committee meets this morning to discuss two key nominations for important roles dealing with economic and health policy.

First up, Dr. Rebecca Haffajee is nominated to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services. This job is right at the center of the department's efforts to tackle the biggest health and family policy challenges, leading on strategy, coordination and research.

For example, one of those big challenges is also a top priority for us here on the Finance Committee: improving mental health care in America. The lack of affordable mental health care is an issue in every community in every state. The biggest cities and the smallest towns. It affects people of all backgrounds and all income levels.

That means solving the mental health challenge requires lawmakers and HHS to bring together the best ideas no matter where they come from. From different federal agencies. From the states and local governments. From Democrats and Republicans here in Congress.

It's a big help to that process when there's a confirmed Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in place. It will also be a big help that Dr. Haffajee is highly qualified for this job, and she brings exactly the right experience to her nomination.

In March 2021, she was appointed Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and she served as the acting Assistant Secretary for more than a year. She is a top expert and a widely-published researcher on health policy who will help lead progress on improving mental health, as well as fighting the drug abuse epidemic, expanding health coverage and lowering the cost of prescription drugs.

Next up, Dr. Jay Shambaugh is nominated to serve as Under Secretary for International Affairs at the Treasury Department. The Treasury's Office of International Affairs deals with major global economic challenges: cracking down on currency manipulation, dealing with trade cheats, and strengthening our relationships with our economic allies, including coordinating and evaluating the effectiveness of

sanctions on Russia. It all comes down to protecting and growing our economy and creating jobs so that more Americans have a chance to get ahead.

Dr. Shambaugh, a Professor of Economics and International Affairs at The George Washington University, previously served as a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisors and on the CEA staff as Chief Economist. He is also an author and expert on international economics.

These are two highly qualified nominees. I want to thank them for joining the committee today, and for their willingness to serve in these challenging roles.

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