

Crapo Statement at Hearing on Health Insurance Coverage

October 20, 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, "Health Insurance Coverage in America: Current and Future Role of Federal Programs."

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

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our witnesses. I would especially like to thank Senator Scott for coming today and for highlighting the critical role states play in our health care system as well as how we can work to address affordability issues for all Americans.

"As we look toward the future of our health care system, we have a responsibility to enhance care quality, to increase affordability and to improve access to lifesaving services and treatment options, from diagnostics to cutting-edge therapies.

"Any reforms we adopt moving forward should build on what works within our current system, in addition to addressing hurdles to high-quality, low-cost care.

"We should look to the unprecedented success of Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage, which empower consumers to choose what works best for them. In contrast with top-down, bureaucratic health care models, these programs leverage choice and competition to expand coverage while lowering costs and enhancing care quality.

"Outside of Medicare, these same core principles have driven a wide range of promising reforms.

"Employers, who provide coverage to roughly half of the population, have adopted diverse tools and models to incentivize workers to seek out lower-cost, higher-quality care options.

"States have adopted waivers and flexibilities to tailor their Medicaid programs to best meet their needs and strategic goals.

"Our health care system has substantial room for improvement, but these creative and market-based models provide a compelling blueprint for bipartisan reform.

"We have seen strong bipartisan backing for proposals to expedite Medicare coverage for cutting-edge devices, to avoid a telehealth access cliff for seniors and to cap out-of-pocket spending under Part D.

"I have also worked with multiple members of this Committee on both sides of the aisle to ensure Medicare beneficiary access to tests that detect dozens of cancers at an early stage, reducing mortality and allowing for proactive care.

“These types of policies have the potential to lower consumer costs while improving health care outcomes.

“Unfortunately, some of the proposals currently under consideration risk moving in the opposite direction, with potentially dire unintended consequences for Americans.

“In addition to exacerbating inflation and weakening our economic recovery, the trillions of dollars in taxing and spending proposed by House Democrats would advance a range of policies that could hinder health care outcomes and drive up costs, with taxpayers bearing the burden.

“The proposed drug price controls, imposed under the guise of negotiation, pose a threat to our global leadership in biomedical innovation.

“A recent University of Chicago study found that the price-fixing policies included in the bill would slash research and development funding by up to 60 percent; reduce the number of new drugs approved in the next twenty years by as many as 342; and trigger a loss of life as much as *twenty times* what the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted on our nation.

“House Democrats have also proposed making their poorly-targeted Obamacare premium subsidy hike permanent. This proposal does nothing to improve Obamacare plans or to address underlying health care costs.

“The Administration has also taken a series of steps that risk constraining consumer choices, delaying or weakening coverage and undermining innovation.

“A number of states that had devoted months, if not years, to crafting comprehensive improvements to their Medicaid programs saw their hard work thrown away overnight as the Administration rescinded their waivers, seemingly for political reasons. This approach undermines the state-federal partnership at Medicaid’s core and creates tremendous uncertainty, in addition to eliminating opportunities for innovation.

“The Administration also announced plans to roll back a popular rule aimed at expediting access to lifesaving medical devices for seniors. This regulation would be a game-changer for patients suffering from cancer, diabetes and a broad range of other conditions. Disappointingly, it may never go into effect.

“I stand ready and eager to work with the Administration and members of both parties to pursue policies that improve health care outcomes, expand access to life-saving drugs and devices, and drive down costs for both the consumer and the taxpayer.

“From telehealth expansion to outcomes-based payment arrangements, there are endless opportunities for us to come together on common ground and meet the needs of the American people.

“We should set aside needless tax hikes and wasteful spending and instead take advantage of these opportunities.

“I again thank the witnesses for their time. We look forward to hearing from you all.”

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