

**STATEMENT BY CHRISTINA PEARSON
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OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
November 1, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Grassley and members of the Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I appreciate your scheduling this hearing during such a busy time and your consideration of my nomination as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Before starting my testimony, I'd like to introduce you to several members of my family. My husband Adam Horvath is here with our daughter Julia, who is our first child and was born 20 days ago. I am grateful for their constant love and support in all my endeavors. Also joining us are my parents, Wiley and Jane Pearson, and my aunt, Mary Frances Pearson. I'm especially proud of the strong tradition of public service in my family shown by my father, who is a retired US Marine and former policy staffer for Senator Mikulski, and my aunt, who was a tax policy staffer for this Committee and at the IRS.

I would like to thank President Bush for nominating me and it has been an honor to serve in his Administration. I'd also like to acknowledge Secretary Leavitt and thank him for his support. He has laid out an exciting vision that is helping to transform our health care system. It has been a highpoint in my career to work for him these past two years as we implemented the new Medicare Part D benefit, took steps to increase value, quality and access in health care, advanced adoption of health information technology and increased preparedness for a pandemic or biological attack.

It is a privilege to be here today and especially before this Committee. My first internships and job after college were with the Senate Finance Committee. My four years working with

Senators Packwood and Roth and the talented Finance staff really shaped the course of my professional life. In these rooms, I developed a passion for public service, an intense interest in health care, an appreciation for the media and a respect for the important role this Committee plays in our government.

It was also at Finance Committee that I saw how health care policy touches the lives of every American, every day. During my tenure, we worked on vital health care legislation concerning HIPAA, Medicare and Medicaid, welfare reform and SCHIP authorization. That experience led me to develop a special interest in health care, leading to jobs as a spokesperson for the American Hospital Association and HHS.

At HHS, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs serves the Secretary's senior advisory on public affairs matters, provides centralized leadership and guidance for public affairs activities within the Department's staff and operating divisions and regional offices and administers the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act. My previous experience has clearly shown that the Administration and Congress have an important partnership. I understand that a critical function of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs is to promote this close collaboration on the communications front. If confirmed, I am committed to consulting with this Committee and working together in a bipartisan manner to achieve our mutual goal of advancing the health and well-being of the American people.

Through my various positions, I have developed a reputation as a person who is collaborative, responsive and innovative in working with staff and the media. If confirmed, I will bring to this position important perspective as a person who has acted as a spokesperson on health policy from a variety of angles, including legislative, federal and association. I have a deep understanding of the vital role each of these plays in the development of health policy and how critical it is to work collaboratively across the spectrum. Further, my previous HHS experience has given me an appreciation for the dedicated public servants I work with as well as respect for the various roles the Department plays in health care and human services that enable me to better communicate and share important information to the public and the Hill.

Becoming a mother recently has recommitted me to the important work underway in health care, especially at HHS. By bringing more attention to critical new information, stressing steps every American can take to prevent chronic diseases, helping to adopt lifesaving technologies like electronic health records and a myriad of other things, we are building a better America for my daughter and future generations. I can think of nothing more rewarding or important than to work with you and others to build a healthier U.S.

Mr. Chairman, it has been an honor to speak to the Committee today. We all share a commitment to ensuring the health and well-being of the American people. If confirmed, I pledge to work collaboratively and transparently with you, Senator Grassley and other members of the Committee to advance this important mission. Thank you very much and I look forward to answering your questions.

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