



For Immediate Release
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**Opening Remarks of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Health Care Delivery System Reform**

Hubert Humphrey said: "Freedom is hammered out on the anvil of discussion, dissent, and debate."

Today, the Finance Committee hosts the first of three roundtable discussions. We hope that these discussions might be the anvil on which we hammer out health care reform.

The Committee has spent a significant amount of time laying the groundwork for comprehensive health reform. In the past year, we've held a dozen hearings. We held a day-long health reform summit.

Now, the time for action approaches. These roundtable discussions will preview many of the policies that the Committee will consider in its June markup.

We will follow up today's roundtable on delivery system reform with another on expanding health coverage to all Americans on May 5. And then we will have our third roundtable on financing health reform on May 14.

Why is delivery system reform such a critical part of comprehensive health reform?

Because our current system falls short. It falls short in terms of the value that we get from the dollars that we spend.

We spend more than any country in the world. Yet the U.S. health system scores 65 out of 100 on indicators of health outcomes, quality, access, equity, and efficiency. And we know from previous research that adults receive recommended care only about half of the time.

We have the opportunity to modernize our outdated payment systems. Those payment systems encourage the delivery of more care, rather than better care.

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We have the opportunity to improve quality. We can encourage care coordination. And we can promote integrated, patient-centered delivery of health care.

Each of our participants brings an important voice to the discussion. They are experts, or stakeholders, or both.

Among our guests are folks from the hospital and physician communities. We have consumer and business representatives. We have voices for chronic care management, current and former government officials, and experts in health care fraud and abuse.

Forgive me for not taking the time to introduce each person. We have distributed a biographical sketch and a brief statement for each participant.

Before today's session, we gave each participant some questions that will help to start our dialog. And beyond that, I anticipate a fruitful discussion.

So, let's get started with our discussion. Let's start hammering out health care reform.

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