

Opening Statement

Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary-Designate Bill Corr

Senate Committee on Finance

April 30, 2009

Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss my nomination to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The mission of the Department of Health and Human Services is of critical importance to our nation and inspires its employees to public service. That mission is to protect the health of all Americans and provide essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. The more than 65,000 employees who serve at the Department are dedicated to fulfilling this mission. They work every day to help deliver health care to those in need, to support children and families, and to protect public health. Their work touches the life of virtually every American.

I am deeply honored that President Obama has nominated me to work with these dedicated men and women and to assist Secretary Sebelius in leading the Department on its critical mission. I believe my previous experience has prepared me to take on this important job.

My professional career has been dedicated to public service, with an extensive focus on health care delivery and public health from the community to the national level. I have worked in an impoverished region of the Appalachian Mountains in eastern Tennessee and southeastern Kentucky organizing and directing non-profit, community-built and owned primary health care centers where I learned first-hand what access to health care means in rural communities and why we must focus on preventing disease before we have to treat it.

I have worked on these and other challenging health problems on Congressional committees in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, an experience that will be invaluable as the Department strives to maintain a strong, productive working relationship with Congress.

And, if confirmed, I will be returning to a Department I know well and have served in the past. During my previous five-year tenure, I served first as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health in the Public Health Service, and ultimately as the Department's Chief of Staff. During my time at HHS, I managed key issues and programs in the Department and its ten major agencies, and developed a keen understanding of the Department's inner workings.

I am eager to return to the Department during this historic effort to ensure that all Americans receive quality, affordable health care. As this Committee and others work to craft comprehensive health reform legislation, I share the conviction of President Obama,

Secretary Sebelius, and so many senators that health reform legislation must be completed this year. If confirmed, I will help ensure the Department provides any support and technical assistance that may help you and your colleagues as you undertake this monumental task.

While the key components of health reform legislation are still to be determined, I expect that the Department of Health and Human Services will have major responsibility for its implementation. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and others in Congress to ensure that health reform is implemented quickly, effectively, and consistent with congressional intent.

As you know, HHS has many other responsibilities that must be carried out as we work to craft and implement health reform. The Department's work includes supporting critical scientific research at the National Institutes of Health; protecting our food and medicine through the Food and Drug Administration; improving public health and combating disease at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and managing a multitude of human service programs, such as Head Start and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. And as this Committee knows well, the Department is currently working to protect or provide health coverage for over 11 million uninsured low-income American children through the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

Moreover, the recent outbreak of 2009 H1N1 flu in parts of the U.S. and around the world, and HHS's ongoing work to respond to this matter, has further demonstrated just how important a role the Department plays in coordinating a national response to public health and other challenges that we may be forced to confront at a moment's notice.

These agencies, programs, and initiatives are fundamental to making our nation safer, stronger, and healthier. If confirmed, it will be my priority to ensure that this critical work continues, and that the Department meets its responsibility to be efficient and effective with taxpayer dollars.

Chairman Baucus and Senator Grassley, thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I truly believe in the ability of the Department of Health and Human Services to make this country healthier and safer for all Americans and am honored to be nominated to carry out its mission. I look forward to answering your questions.