



For Immediate Release
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**BAUCUS COMMENTS ON GAO REPORT;
MEDICAID BENEFICIARIES NOT GETTING NECESSARY PREVENTIVE CARE**

*Finance Chair vows to improve delivery of necessary preventive care,
reiterates need for health care reform*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) commented today after the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released findings that, while a large proportion of Americans covered under Medicaid have health conditions that can be better treated by preventive services, many fail to receive preventive services available to them and receive fewer screenings and early treatments than those who are privately insured. GAO did note that improvements were made since the release of a similar report in 2001, and Baucus vowed to continue working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services (CMS) to make further improvements and ensure beneficiaries get access to vital preventive services that improve health and save money throughout the system.

“Prevention is among the simplest ways to improve our quality of life and save money throughout the health care system, and more work needs to be done to ensure that all Americans, including those covered under Medicaid, are receiving these important services,” Baucus said. **“I am committed to passing health care reform that will increase our focus on wellness and prevention throughout the health care system, and I will continue working with CMS to ensure all Medicaid beneficiaries have greater access to necessary preventive care.”**

Senator Baucus requested this report as a follow-up to a 2001 study to assess the effectiveness of state Medicaid programs in getting important care to beneficiaries and determine whether progress had been made since that time. GAO found more and better reporting led to improvements in service delivery, clarification of covered benefits and more beneficiaries receiving these vital services.

Still, many beneficiaries fail to receive preventive services available to them, though a large percentage suffer from chronic conditions, particularly obesity, that can be identified or managed by preventive services. GAO recommended that CMS ensure regular reviews of preventive care services and expedite its efforts to provide states with guidance on covered benefits. In response to GAO’s recommendation that CMS expedite its effort to provide guidance on coverage of obesity-related services for Medicaid children, CMS committed to providing this guidance by the end of 2009.

View the full GAO report, “Medicaid Preventive Services: Concerted Efforts Needed to Ensure Beneficiaries Receive Services,” at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09578.pdf>.

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