

## **Opening Statement**

**Ellen Murray**

**Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Resources and Technology, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

**Senate Committee on Finance**

**October 15, 2009**

Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in connection with my nomination to be Assistant Secretary for Resources and Technology at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I am honored to be the President's nominee for this position at this important time in the Department's and the nation's history.

The Assistant Secretary for Resources and Technology at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for development of the HHS annual budget, the execution of that budget, the implementation of the Recovery Act, for grants policy and information technology policy, and for financial management – to provide for the direction and coordination of these activities throughout HHS.

Mr. Chairman, I believe my education and experience uniquely qualify me for this position.

My educational background includes a degree in Economics from Trinity College and a J.D. degree from the George Mason University School of Law.

For the past ten years, I have been staff director for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. In that position, I am responsible for coordinating the Senate's appropriation of funds to most HHS agencies, which begins with a review of the President's Budget submitted to Congress by HHS. I also had a large role in the development of the HHS section of the Recovery Act passed by Congress earlier this year.

In addition, I have previous experience working at the Department. As an attorney with the HHS Office of General Counsel (OGC), one of my principal responsibilities included advising the Office of Budget on appropriations matters. I also represented the OGC on a Department-wide task force on grants policy and represented the Department at the Board of Contract Appeals.

As a budget analyst for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), I was not only responsible for development of the ACF section of the HHS budget, but also for the execution of the final appropriation.

In my roles both at ACF and earlier at the Social Security Administration (then a part of HHS), my responsibilities included the development of cost estimates for mandatory HHS programs, including Child Support and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

In summary, I have a strong understanding of the federal budget process, including its execution; I am very familiar with the HHS budget and the issues that surround that budget; I have experience in the area of grants policy; and I bring a unique understanding of the Recovery Act as it relates to HHS.

I am eager to begin work as Assistant Secretary for Resources and Technology. I cannot think of another federal agency that does more good than the Department of Health and Human Services. I believe in the Department's mission, and I look forward to tackling the many budgetary challenges that lie ahead.

As the members of this Committee know well, we are potentially facing years of scarce resources. My overarching priority as Assistant Secretary would be to ensure that HHS can continue to fulfill its commitment to promoting health and providing essential human services, even under difficult budgetary circumstances. That will mean investing in programs that work, eliminating those that don't, and doing more with less

More broadly speaking, President Obama has expressed a firm commitment to promoting efficiency government-wide by examining federal budgets as a whole, rather than as a collection of unrelated components. I intend to take that approach to HHS by working to ensure that the programs and initiatives led by each of the Department's many agencies and divisions complement, rather than compete with, one another.

My final priority would be to ensure that the resources of HHS are in place to facilitate the implementation of legislation to reform our nation's health care system. I know that, after months of working tirelessly, the Committee recently approved legislation in this area, and that discussions in both the Senate and House of Representatives are ongoing. Whatever the final product looks like, I understand that the effort to implement the legislation will be an enormous undertaking. If confirmed, I stand ready to marshal the resources of HHS in support of the President's and the Secretary's effort to expand coverage and lower health care costs for the American people.

Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Grassley, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my nomination. I would be happy to answer any questions.