

Statement by Senator Hassan
Senate Finance Subcommittee on Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Growth
Hearing on “The Fiscal Outlook”
October 7, 2020

As prepared for delivery

Thank you Senator Cassidy, and thank you to Director Swagel and Comptroller General Dodaro for testifying today.

This Subcommittee is charged with promoting fiscal responsibility and economic growth because the two go hand-in-hand.

As a nation, we must be concerned about the growth in the national debt. If not handled carefully, it could threaten to slow the economy and jeopardize our ability to make key investments in everything from innovation to national security.

The first step to improving our nation’s fiscal outlook is improving the economic outlook of families, businesses, communities and states that have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. Yesterday, Federal Reserve Chair Powell warned that “too little support would lead to a weak recovery, creating unnecessary hardship for households and businesses.”

Providing assistance to families who can’t make ends meet and helping hard-hit business stay afloat is not only the right thing to do – it is also the fiscally responsible thing to do. It will help ensure that families can pay their rent or buy groceries at their local stores, and that small business can continue employing their workers - which will help to keep local economies moving and improve our nation’s economic outlook.

The second step to getting our nation’s fiscal house in order – after the recovery from COVID-19 – is for Congress to implement common-sense, bipartisan measures that promote fiscal responsibility and reduce the national debt.

As recommended by GAO, we need to address the so-called “tax gap,” which comes from corporations and millionaires avoiding taxes by underreporting income to the Treasury.

We need to revisit the partisan tax giveaways that were jammed through Congress in 2017, in order to ensure that major corporations are paying their fair share in taxes.

And we need to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse across the federal government – one of my top priorities as the Ranking Member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight.

In seeking a bipartisan path to improving our fiscal standing, Congress must also strengthen and protect Social Security and Medicare – while making it absolutely clear that seniors will receive the full benefits that they earned over a lifetime of work.

Overall, it is clear that – once we have recovered from COVID-19 – the sooner we address the national debt, the better. As shown by CBO and GAO, the difficulties of addressing the fiscal outlook only compound over time – making it all the more pressing that we work together in a bipartisan way to get through this crisis and then develop a fiscally responsible long-term plan for the federal budget.

Senator Cassidy, I look forward to working with you and the other members of the Finance Committee, and I look forward to hearing from Director Swagel and Comptroller General Dodaro on ways to improve our fiscal outlook