

Statement of Seema Verma
Nominee to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and
Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Senate Committee on Finance
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Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. I am deeply honored to be here, and am grateful for your consideration of my nomination by President Trump to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. I appreciate the time many of you and your staffs have taken to meet with me in advance of this hearing.

Before I begin my statement, I would like to take a moment to introduce my family. I am truly grateful for the love and support of my parents Mr. and Mrs. Verma, my husband Sanjay Mishra and my two children Maya and Shaan.

I have often been asked, by my family as well as by the members of this Committee, why I would be interested in a job as complex and difficult as running a trillion dollar government agency such as CMS.

I humbly accepted President Trump's call to service because I understand what is at stake. I have never stood on the sidelines of our nation's health care debate, merely pointing out what is wrong with our health care system. I have spent my entire life helping the most disadvantaged in our society receive the kind of accessible, affordable and competent health care service that our country's health care system is renowned for.

More than twenty years ago, when I graduated from college, I started my career working on national policy on behalf of people with HIV and AIDS, as well as low income mothers to improve birth outcomes. I fought for coverage, for greater health care access and for improving the quality of care – and have continued to fight for these issues for the past 20 years.

But, sadly, I am deeply concerned about our health care system. There is frustration all around. Doctors are increasingly frustrated by a number of costly and time-consuming burdens, and quite frankly, many Americans are not getting the care that they need.

We have a long way to go in improving health outcomes. Health care continues to grow more and more expensive, and the American people are tired of partisan politics. They just want their health care system fixed.

And I know this, not simply because I have worked in health care, but because of how intimately it has affected my personal life.

Two people I truly love have been immensely affected by enormous health care challenges.

My own mother is a breast cancer survivor due to early diagnosis and treatment, and I thank God that she is with me today.

Also, a few years back, my neighbor was diagnosed with a stage 4 Neuroblastoma. A large tumor had been growing for some time, wrapping around his kidney. Aidan went through excruciating chemotherapy, radiation, stem cell treatment, surgeries, and countless trips to the hospitals and doctors. Experimental treatments were used by his medical team. This treatment regimen would be excruciating for anyone to endure, but Aidan was only 4 years old. At such a young age, we didn't know if he would live or die.

But this May Aidan will celebrate his 12th birthday.

Both my mom and Aidan are testaments to the ingenuity of the American medical system that saved their lives, as well as to the grace of God. This is why people travel from around the world to get care here in the United States.

I want to be part of the solution making the system work for all Americans. I want to be able to look my children in the eye and tell them I did my part to serve my country and make things better for people who often do not have a voice. I want to tell my children that I fought to ensure that all American families, like Aidan's and my own, have the care that they need.

This is a formidable challenge, but I am no stranger to achieving success under difficult circumstances.

My father left his entire family to immigrate to the United States during the 1960s to pursue four degrees while he worked to earn money to pay for school, as well as to provide for his family.

On my mother's side, my grandmother was married at the age of 17 with no more than a 5th grade education, but my mother was the first woman in her family to finish a master's degree.

My parents made a lot of sacrifices along the way to provide me with opportunities they didn't have.

I am extremely humbled as a first-generation American to be sitting before this committee after being nominated by the President of the United States. It is a testament to the fact that the American Dream is very much alive for those willing to work for it.

And it is my passion to continue to work on the front lines of health care, changing and improving this country's healthcare delivery system.

Throughout my career, I have brought people together from all sides of the political spectrum to forge solutions that worked for everyone. These consensus efforts have resulted in programs that have provided healthcare coverage to over a million vulnerable Americans. One of the proudest moments of my career was watching the Indiana legislature pass the Healthy Indiana Plan with a bipartisan vote.

For me, today's hearing is not simply a matter of finding a good executive to run a large government bureaucracy. It is about bringing someone to the table who fundamentally understands that the future of our country's health care is at stake.

CMS is a one trillion-dollar agency, and through Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Health Insurance Marketplace, it covers over 100 million people, many of whom are among our most vulnerable citizens. Providing high quality, accessible healthcare for these Americans isn't just a luxury, it's a necessity and often a matter of life and death.

Should I be confirmed, I will work to ensure that CMS's programs are focused on achieving positive outcomes. As the nation's largest purchaser of healthcare, we must do more, achieve more than the mere distribution of insurance cards. We can use these programs to truly make a difference in people's lives to prevent and cure disease, manage chronic illnesses, and promote healthy lifestyles and independence from government assistance.

In order to achieve our goals, I will work toward policies that foster patient-centered care and increase competition, quality, and access while driving down costs.

Patients and their doctors should be making decisions about their health care, not the federal government. We need to ensure that people have choices about their care. We shouldn't assume that all vulnerable or low income populations don't want choices or aren't capable of making the best decisions for themselves and their families. We must find creative ways to empower people to take ownership of their health and be engaged in making cost and quality decisions as they seek care. CMS's rules and regulations shouldn't drive doctors and providers away or crowd out care, but should instead support them in delivering high quality care to their patients.

If confirmed, I will work toward modernizing CMS's programs to address the changing needs of the people they serve, leveraging innovation and technology to drive coordinated, cost effective care. I will ensure that efforts around preventing fraud and abuse are a priority, since we cannot afford to waste a single taxpayer dollar. Ultimately, while we strive to provide the highest level of care to our current beneficiaries, we must solidify the programs' sustainability for future generations.

I will work toward ushering in a new era of state flexibility and leadership. For too long our state partners have been sharing in the cost but have not been allowed to have a meaningful role in decision making. We need to guarantee that appropriate protections are in the place for our most vulnerable populations and hold states accountable for achieving outcomes around quality and access, but we also need to create an environment that incentivizes innovation over paper-pushing, so that we can find new and better ways of achieving our mutual goals.

If I have the honor of being confirmed, I will carry this vision, along with my strong belief in open communication, collaboration, and bipartisanship with me to CMS. I will work with you, be responsive to your inquiries and concerns, and value your counsel.

I will do everything I can to ensure that your constituents are being properly served by the programs at CMS, and that these programs operate in an efficient and transparent manner.

I thank you for your consideration of my nomination.