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## **Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Nomination Hearing of Dr. Mehmet Oz to Lead CMS**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Dr. Mehmet Oz is nominated to oversee the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which is responsible for the health and well-being of over 160 million Americans.

Once again, our dedicated investigators on the Finance Committee have brought the receipts.

Dr. Oz is the second Trump nominee to come before the Finance Committee this year with a record of dodging Medicare and Social Security taxes. This tax loophole hurts Medicare and benefited Dr. Oz by \$440,000 in the last three years. This is a doctor who will testify about his concern for Medicare's well-being. Dr. Oz will testify about his concerns about Medicare solvency, yet he is unwilling to pay the same taxes that millions of Americans pay out of every paycheck. That will make it harder for the program to keep up with rising costs. That means, if confirmed, the person nominated to run Medicare thinks it's acceptable to not pay his taxes into Social Security and Medicare like nurses and firefighters do out of each paycheck.

He's also been a big promoter of private, for-profit health insurance that too often displays little interest in protecting the seniors who enroll in these plans. On our side, we're especially concerned that seniors signing up for these plans are being lured in by deceptive marketing and too-good-to-be-true benefit packages. Then they are walloped by business practices that delay and deny care. When he ran for Senate, Dr. Oz proposed putting all seniors into private Medicare Advantage plans, leaving Traditional Medicare to wither on the vine.

Dr. Oz has demonstrated no interest at all in improving Traditional Medicare for the 34 million Americans that count on the program. That's been a big priority for this Committee.

He's made a lucrative career out of advertising these for-profit insurance options targeting seniors with shady marketing tactics on his television program. He even went so far as to sign up to be an insurance salesman himself. Dr. Oz used his television program to promote some of the most ludicrous wellness grifting I've heard to date. Green coffee extract and raspberry ketones for weight loss. Selenium supplements for cancer prevention.

Several weeks ago, this committee heard a slew of similarly misleading claims from another unqualified Trump nominee. Now our country is facing the biggest measles outbreak in decades while the Trump Administration touts the benefits of cod liver oil and terrifies parents out of vaccinating their kids.

Meanwhile, Trump, Musk, and Congressional Republicans are gearing up to deal the biggest blow to Medicaid in history. These cuts to Medicaid will be devastating for kids and adults with disabilities. It will destroy care in nursing homes as we know it. And it's going to mean ripping health insurance away from millions of families already struggling to get by. If confirmed, Dr. Oz will be responsible for executing whatever destruction is brought down on the Medicaid program by the cuts Republicans are preparing to make. He will be responsible for premium hikes for families who purchase their own health insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Dr. Oz would be the person in charge of these programs. He would be calling the shots about what gets cut and what stays. He would be the one to allow – or stop – any attempts by Elon Musk and his DOGE cronies to control Medicare and Medicaid payment systems.

Meanwhile, Republicans, and people like Dr. Oz, are all too happy to ignore the predatory tactics for-profit insurers are using to delay and deny care for patients to turn a profit. Families across the country want to know that their health care will be protected, and that their premiums will remain affordable. Instead, Republicans are marching ahead with their plans to take an axe to their health insurance. They want to put for-profit insurance companies and private equity firms that make their money off of delaying and denying care in the driver's seat of Americans' health care. That's not what the American people voted for, and it's not what they deserve.

Based on the evidence I've just laid out, the American public have all those reasons to believe Dr. Oz will be fully on board with the Trump and Republican effort to cut Medicaid, and ready to coddle for-profit insurance companies. Today's hearing is an opportunity for him to show us otherwise.

I'll close with this. Every member of this committee will own the consequences if they continue to support Trump's nominees who are wealthy snake oil salesmen more focused on peddling conspiracies than protecting public health and science.

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