

Opening Statement

Thank you, Senator Stabenow, for your leadership in chairing today's forum. The Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and Medicare are vital to hundreds of millions of Americans, and we are very lucky to have you fighting to protect these programs.

President-elect Trump has spent the past few weeks selecting the people who will fill the top jobs in his government. These are decisions that have tremendous consequences.

When it comes to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, President Trump's choice will have an enormous effect on the lives of everyone in this room and everyone in this country. That person will help determine:

- Whether millions of Americans continue to have access to medical care.
- Whether contraception or cancer screenings or flu shots must be covered by your insurance plan.
- Whether Medicare and Medicaid are protected for the one hundred million Americans that rely on these programs.

In short, these hiring decisions tell you a lot about the **values** of the incoming Trump administration. On November 29th, the President-elect nominated Congressman Tom Price to serve as the HHS Secretary.

Now, unlike many of the President-elect's other nominees, who have little to no experience in the policy areas they are being asked to oversee, Congressman Price has a **lot** of experience in health care policy. And that's why we're so worried. His record makes clear that he has some very radical, scary ideas about how to change health care in this country.

Congressman Price once described the ACA's ban on discriminating against individuals with pre-existing conditions as [quote] "a terrible idea."

He has voted ten times to defund Planned Parenthood, which provides lifesaving cancer and sexually transmitted infection screenings to millions of patients a year.

He has proposed privatizing Medicare and increasing the eligibility age for coverage. And he has championed massive cuts to the Medicaid program leave millions of Americans uninsured or with fewer benefits.

Twenty-four senators, led by Senator Casey of Pennsylvania, sent a letter to Senators Hatch and Alexander asking them to include witnesses in Congressman Price's nomination hearings who could talk about the impact that these radical policy changes would have on their lives. We asked for that because we believe that this kind of testimony is vital if Senators are to fully examine the record of these nominees, as the Constitution requires.

For today's panelists, I'm sorry that the Republicans running this place decided your stories weren't important enough to include at Congressman Price's confirmation hearing, but we are holding this event to make sure that your voices are heard. I know you also speak for millions of other Americans who share your concerns about the future of health care in this country.