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BAUCUS, SEBELIUS REVIEW PRESIDENT'S PLANS TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH PROGRAMS, SAVE TAXPAYER DOLLARS

Finance Chair: This Budget Builds on the Progress Health Reform Is Already Making

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) convened a hearing today with Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to examine the plans in the President's fiscal year 2013 budget proposal to deliver better health care to Americans, restrain the rising costs of care and find effective ways to fight poverty by helping families in economic crisis. Baucus said the proposal builds upon the progress being made thanks to health reform, but more work needs to be done to save money and improve care.

"This budget builds on the progress health reform is already making saving millions of Americans money, giving them more choices and improving access to their doctors." Baucus said. "Never before has the need to rein in out of control health care costs been higher. By spending our precious health care dollars wisely and efficiently, we will lower premiums for seniors enrolled in Medicare today and keep the program strong for the generations to come. And while the economy continues to recover, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families must be maintained for the well-being of children and families facing dire circumstances."

Baucus was a chief Senate architect of the Affordable Care Act, which is helping to make the country's health care system more efficient by rewarding success and innovation in healthcare and taking new steps to fight fraud and improve communication within the industry. At the hearing, he noted the health reform law also provided the biggest deficit reduction in more than a decade. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the law will reduce deficits by \$143 billion in its first ten years and by more than \$1 trillion in the decade that follows. CBO also recently released a report showing that over the next ten years, per-beneficiary costs will average "just one percent a year more than the rate of inflation." This represents a significant improvement from the last several decades, when costs grew five percent faster than inflation. Baucus asked Sebelius how the budget proposal will build on that progress to find savings while maintaining high-quality care.

Baucus also discussed the critical work HHS does preventing and fighting poverty, especially while many families are still struggling to make ends meet. According to the Census Bureau, there are nearly seven million families with children below the poverty line. Baucus addressed the need to maintain the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and to work together to improve the child welfare system.