

Crapo Statement at CMS Nomination Hearing

Washington, D.C.—U.S. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Mike Crapo delivered the following remarks at a hearing to consider the nomination of Mehmet Oz to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

As prepared for delivery:

“Thank you, Dr. Oz, for being here today and for your willingness to serve as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator.

“My staff and I have enjoyed working with you and your team throughout this committee’s rigorous vetting process, and I appreciate your candor and responsiveness.

“You have provided significant amounts of documentation to substantiate your tax return positions and followed all applicable law. You have met the same due diligence standard that has applied to nominees in every previous administration.

“Thank you for your cooperation throughout this exacting process, and for conducting yourself with kindness and professionalism. I look forward to continuing our work together.

“For those outside of Washington, CMS can seem like a bureaucratic black box, largely removed from the everyday challenges facing patients and clinicians.

“Dr. Oz, you offer a wealth of firsthand experience and expertise, having studied, practiced and taught as an accomplished physician. In short, you understand how D.C. legalese looks on the ground and how policy plays out in practice.

“That is exactly the mindset we need in a CMS Administrator.

“From our discussions, you also clearly recognize the importance of this role and the programs CMS manages, along with the tremendous responsibility that taking the helm entails.

“As the world’s largest health insurer, CMS sets health care coverage and payment policies for tens of millions of Americans and their providers.

“Medicare currently enrolls more than 68 million Americans. Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program comprise close to 80 million. And more than 24 million consumers have selected individual-market plans.

“Over the course of the next 25 years, analysts project the Medicare-aged population will grow by an additional 47 percent, further underscoring the high stakes of CMS policymaking.

“Ensuring sustainable, stable and proactive rules of the road for these programs will necessitate a collaborative and constructive approach.

“Medicare seniors deserve better prescription drug affordability, along with stronger access to pharmacists and doctors. This Committee has taken steps to achieve those goals on a broad bipartisan basis, and we look forward to working with you to advance those measures. This includes pharmaceutical benefit manager reform, a stated priority for President Trump.

“Your background also offers the ideal experience for guiding efforts to reform our broken clinician payment system, an issue you understand from both a policy standpoint and a pragmatic perspective.

“Modernizing federal health care programs will require rethinking our outdated approach to treating the symptoms--rather than the underlying causes--of chronic diseases.

“Equipping providers with the training to employ a diverse array of interventions, from nutrition and lifestyle changes to cutting-edge drugs and devices, will save lives and taxpayer dollars.

“Technological advancements like telehealth also offer an opportunity to reshape health care delivery in rural communities, including in Idaho, where access to basic services remains challenging.

“Medicare Advantage’s market-driven benefit structure provides seniors with more timely access to these and other novel approaches to care. Its successes should serve as a model for other federal programs.

“Similarly, Medicaid’s essential safety-net coverage relies on a balance between state-based flexibilities with key patient protections. Based on our conversations, I am confident your experience as a physician serving Medicaid beneficiaries will be an asset to CMS.

“I look forward to learning more about your vision for how we can work together to strengthen our health care system for patients, providers and taxpayers.

“Thank you again, Dr. Oz. I now recognize Ranking Member Wyden for his opening remarks.”