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***Wyden Statement on HHS and Treasury Department Nominees at  
Finance Committee Hearing  
As Prepared for Delivery***

Joining the Finance Committee this morning are Alex Adams, nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary for Family Support at the Administration for Children and Families also known as ACF, and Jonathan McKernan nominated to serve as Undersecretary of Domestic Finance at the Treasury Department.

The Administration for Children and Families is responsible for the well-being of children and families. Let's do a quick run down on where things stand six months into Donald Trump's presidency, with regard to their health and safety.

More than 15 million Americans are about to lose their health care so Republicans could pay for tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy.

Robert Kennedy has fired scientists and experts to put anti-vaccine quacks in charge of vaccine safety.

The United States is currently suffering its worst measles outbreak in 30 years, with 1,300 cases and counting.

The workforce and funding for agencies and programs that are designed to keep the American people safe and healthy have been gutted.

In short, Donald Trump, Kennedy, and Congressional Republicans have been working overtime to make America weaker, sicker and poorer.

That brings us to Dr. Adams. My team was told by advocates on the ground in Idaho and across the country that they are terrified about what he has done in his state harming vulnerable children, families, and people with disabilities, and the actions he will be poised to take nationwide should he be confirmed.

Dr. Adams is a proponent of deregulation at any cost, what he and other conservative elites call "zero-based regulation."

But let me put this in English folks. When I was director of the Grey Panthers, and senior citizens for about seven years, and listened to all this government talk. When I hear “zero-based regulation,” it tells me there are no guardrails. That’s what we always want in policy. We want people to have the freedom to make as many choices as they possibly can that are theirs and their families. But we gotta have some guardrails. And we have been looking at some of what has happened in Idaho, and particularly, lowering safety standards in licensure for kids with disability.

The person in charge of ACF is responsible for overseeing Head Start programs that are struggling to keep their doors open due to funding uncertainty. This person is responsible for making sure there are basic health and safety regulations for child care in America. And this person is responsible for the protection of unaccompanied immigrant children who are currently languishing in detention while Donald Trump is co-opting this child welfare agency for immigration enforcement.

On top of all of that, ACF for the first time ever will be responsible for senior nutrition and protection and advocacy for seniors and Americans with disabilities, among other critical services for these communities. In the fallout of the HHS mass firings, more responsibility with fewer staff is a recipe for harm.

Heading up ACF is a big job centered around keeping these families and communities safe.

It goes without saying that America’s children deserve someone in this role who will follow basic science. Someone who will go to the mat to keep them healthy and safe, no matter their faith, immigration status, or how they identify.

I fear Dr. Adams’ track record doesn’t inspire confidence.

Now I’ll turn to Jonathan McKernan’s nomination to serve as Undersecretary of Domestic Finance at the Treasury Department.

If confirmed, Mr. McKernan would play a major role in how the federal government organizes its debt and how Treasury handles the most sensitive data of American taxpayers.

Over the last few months, who has access to that data and how it’s handled has been called into serious question as DOGE and its rogue employees wrestle to get their hands on this sensitive information.

Donald Trump and the people around him are weaponizing these federal agencies to go after free speech and the people and groups that disagree with them.

What’s needed in this role is someone that will stand firm against Trump’s ongoing campaign of chaos and corruption. I look forward to hearing from Mr. McKernan on how he intends to stand up to that chaos and corruption if confirmed.

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