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BAUCUS, SEBELIUS TALK HEALTH CARE REFORM, JOBS, ECONOMY

Baucus: "Every day reminds us of the need for reform"

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) convened a hearing today with Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to examine health care proposals in President Obama's fiscal year 2011 budget. Baucus reaffirmed his commitment to passing a comprehensive health care reform bill and focused the discussion on reform's potential to create jobs, provide assistance to small businesses and strengthen our economic recovery.

"Clearly, to get the economy moving again, we have to do all we can to create jobs. Health care costs are rising so much higher than wages, and employers want to provide health insurance, but as they are forced to pay more and more for health insurance, it means lost wages on the balance sheet," Baucus said. **"Getting health care reform passed will lower the rate of increase in health care costs and that's going to mean employees will see higher wages. Health care reform really is a job creator – and it helps businesses and employees keep jobs."**

Congress's health care reform proposals would lower the growth of health care costs and result in higher wages for American workers. Sebelius also pointed out that lowering the burden of rising health care costs for American businesses will increase their ability to compete with foreign companies in today's global economy.

Baucus and Sebelius also discussed specific proposals in health care reform legislation to help small businesses. Rising costs have forced more than half of America's small businesses to reduce or stop providing health benefits for their workers in the last two years. In addition to lowering health care costs for all employers, reform will provide billions of dollars in tax credits to help small businesses provide quality, affordable health care coverage to their workers. And reform will create a new marketplace where small businesses can pool together to spread their financial risk, increase their leverage and enhance their choice and buying power.

Finally, Baucus urged Sebelius to find ways to bring down administrative costs and reduce fraud and waste throughout our health care system. He called on the Secretary to find ways to quantify the problems and report back to the Committee on the Department's progress. Baucus expressed the strong desire of the Committee to work with her to find solutions and provide the legislative tools HHS needs to accomplish this goal.

The Finance Committee discussed the President's budget yesterday with Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and will convene a hearing tomorrow with Office of Management and Budget Director Peter Orszag.

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