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BAUCUS URGES ADMINISTRATION TO IMPROVE PUBLIC OUTREACH FOR HEALTH LAW TO SUCCEED

Finance Chairman: "This is a good law, but it can't work if people don't understand it"

WASHINGTON – At a Senate Finance Committee hearing today examining the administration's fiscal year 2014 budget with Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) said the administration must improve its public outreach on the benefits of the Affordable Care Act and its health insurance marketplaces if the law is to work as intended.

"This is a good law but it can't work if people don't understand it," Senator Baucus said. **"I hear from people on the ground in Montana that they are confused about the health care law. For the insurance marketplaces to work, people need to know their options and how to enroll. I want families' lives to be easier, and I want small businesses to focus on job creation, not confusion. The administration must use every day between now and October 1 to have insurance marketplaces up and running."**

Senator Baucus cited a recent Kaiser Family Foundation study, which found that 57 percent of Americans said they lack enough information about the law to understand how it will affect them. In fact, 57 percent believed the law included a public option, and 40 percent believed it established a government panel to make end-of-life decisions for Medicare patients, neither of which is true.

Senator Baucus also addressed the belt-tightening measures included in the administration's fiscal year 2014 budget. He said wealthy seniors should contribute more through higher Medicare premiums, and he said private plans should not be paid at a higher rate than traditional Medicare. He added that efforts to root out fraud should be strengthened – a major priority of his and the committee's. Every dollar invested in fighting fraud generates a 500 percent return in recollected taxpayer funds.

Senator Baucus also expressed concern over the administration's proposed change to Social Security's cost of living adjustments, known as "chained CPI." He said adopting chained CPI would put too much of the deficit burden on seniors by reducing their Social Security benefits, as well as potentially increasing out-of-pocket health care costs by reducing payments to certain Medicare providers.

"Cutting Social Security along with Medicare will hit seniors with a one-two punch," Senator Baucus said. **"We all know cutting our debt will require compromise. Everyone will need to pitch in, but we can't balance the budget on the backs of America's seniors."**

Senator Baucus said the proposed budget recognizes the need to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, or TANF, which gives families in need a critical lifeline with job training. He added his support for the proposed investment of \$5.9 billion in early learning and child care, which will help more than 100,000 kids get an early start on the road to success.

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