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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on Chronic Care
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Thank you, Chairman Hatch. I have looked forward to this morning for many years. That's because the Finance Committee is beginning to tackle to the premier challenge of American health care policy – specifically, by updating the guarantee of Medicare to better serve seniors with chronic illness.

When I was director of the Oregon Gray Panthers, Medicare had two parts – A and B. If you broke your ankle and had surgery in the hospital, you used Part A. If you got a bad case of the flu, and you saw the doctor in the office, you used Part B.

That is not Medicare today. Today, Medicare is about cancer, diabetes, heart disease, strokes, and other chronic conditions. Seniors who have two or more of these chronic conditions account for more than 90 percent of Medicare spending. And today, seniors get their care in a variety of different ways. There's still fee-for-service, but there is also Medicare Advantage, Accountable Care Organizations, and other innovations being tested today.

Because Medicare is a guarantee of defined benefits, it's past time to update this promise so as to deliver to patients with chronic conditions the best possible care in the most efficient manner. The legislation we will discuss today begins this transformations: more care at home and less in institutions. Expanded use of life-saving technology. A stronger focus on primary care. In my view, still to come, is ensuring that each senior with multiple chronic conditions has an advocate to guide them through what can be a teeth-gnashing experience of navigating American health care.

I'd like to make two final points. First is to contrast this with the partisan handling of the debate over the future of the Affordable Care Act. In this instance, the doors were open, not closed. There has been bipartisan cooperation, not partisan reconciliation. And the public was asked to help improve the bill, rather than being taken for granted.

Finally, I'd like to thank my colleagues, especially Chairman Hatch and Senators Isakson and Warner. We'll hear later this morning about how this process has been a model for bipartisanship and regular order, and it's been an honor to be a part of that process.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

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