

Personal Testimony of Eric Hargan  
Senate Finance Committee

Thank you, Governor Thompson, for that warm introduction. And also, thank you to the many dedicated public servants who have loaned their talents to such great effect at HHS over the years, such as Secretary Leavitt and Deputy Secretary Azar during my previous time at HHS. I learned so much from them. Thank you also to Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, and all of the members of the committee, many of whom I have already visited during this process. It has been a tremendous honor to meet with you, and I look forward, if I have the privilege to receive the approval of the Senate, to meet with and work with all of you on future challenges and opportunities at HHS.

I would like to start by acknowledging some of the members of my family who have joined me here today: my wife Emily, my sons Thomas and Joe and my sister Jody, who has come in from Paducah, Kentucky. Thank you all for being here with me today!

Now I think it would be informative for me to give you some of my personal background. I am currently an attorney, most recently with a law firm in its Chicago office, specializing in health law. Before returning to the private practice of law, I served at HHS under the George W. Bush Administration, as Deputy General Counsel, then as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Secretary and finally as Acting Deputy Secretary. My time at HHS serving in the position of Deputy Secretary has provided me with valuable experience that will help inform my work in the same role in this Administration. I believe that my years at HHS will help me with understanding HHS and helping it fulfill the unique role the Department has to play in ensuring that the many programs Congress has committed to it are carried out well and faithfully, for the benefit of the millions of Americans who rely on them.

I understand this role, coming to it from my own personal background. Although I live in Chicagoland now, I am originally from deep Southern Illinois, from a farm near a small town called Mounds, population 810 now I believe. My father worked at a local DOE plant as a technician, and my mother was an X-ray tech. My father was also a Korean War veteran having served as a sergeant in the Air Force as a mechanic. He was also, on and off, a local politician, as county commissioner in Pulaski County, VFW commander in Mounds, and he also served as a union shop steward in the local plant.

My mother, originally from a small Finnish community near Duluth, worked at our local healthcare facility for 58 years prior to passing away a few years ago. I say "healthcare facility" because she started at what was then St Mary's Hospital in Cairo, Illinois. This hospital underwent the same evolution that has happened to many small town hospitals throughout the country, as rural areas and their healthcare systems have suffered so much in the past decades. St Mary's, as is the

unfortunate case with many rural hospitals, is no longer around, although the good local people still continue to provide care to the community.

After leaving high school, I attended Harvard College and then Columbia Law School, followed by years of private practice. And all along, I have tried to carry on the family tradition of public service not only by joining President Bush's HHS, but also serving as Governor Rauner's co-chair for his healthcare and human services transition in 2014 and 2015, and then volunteering for the State of Illinois on its State Health Improvement Planning Council and the State Innovation Model Workgroup. I also serve my community as a precinct committeeman for my township, and help as much as I can with our parish and school at St. Isaac's.

So, between my father's example of public service and my mother's longtime work at our local hospital, in some ways combining public service and healthcare seems like fate to me. I am proud that President Trump has shown confidence in me to nominate me to return to my former position at HHS. And in Secretary Price, I see a leader with an ideal background: a physician with experience as a provider in HHS's programs, as well as having been a leading legislator on Capitol Hill. I am hopeful that my experience as an attorney and administrator will serve as a good complement to him, and enable us and the Department to achieve our mission on behalf of the American people.

People have asked me: why go back in? But I cannot imagine, if given the opportunity by you, that I could turn away. The challenges are so great, whether in public health, in healthcare finance, in facilitating innovation in healthcare and in the administration of human services, that I cannot imagine **not** wanting to participate, and to lend to the government both my past experience at HHS, as well as the fruit of my years of work in the healthcare sector since then, to help as much as I can.

At HHS, I found in my previous tenure a congenial group of public servants, who are dedicated to fulfilling their given tasks. There is a level of patriotism and good attitude that I think many outside would find surprising, given the level of rhetoric we often see. Certainly, in a reversal of many people's experiences, I walked out of a place of employment, HHS, **less** cynical than I went in.

This does not mean that HHS does not have any challenges that need to be addressed. And in the Deputy Secretary position, as the chief operating officer of the Department, you see the issues and details up close. The office helps implement the laws that the Department has been given, coordinates the agencies and divisions, and ensures the Department runs efficiently. For so large an enterprise, this is a daunting goal. But I believe with good will and the assistance of the staff at HHS, and the Congress, that this is not an impossible task. We cannot solve everything at once, but we can, I believe, make a real and lasting difference in Americans' lives and health, and that in itself would be a worthy goal. Thank you.