

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY AT THE HELP
COMMITTEE MARK UP OF HEALTH BILLS**

*United States Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Executive
Session*

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today, the Committee will take action on several health priorities, and I thank Senator Enzi and Members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle for working with great diligence and commitment to resolving differences on the legislation before us. Members and their staffs have worked through a large number of amendments or potential amendments, and we will do our best to work through the remainder today.

I won't take the Committee's time to describe all the bills in detail, but I do want to mention briefly the legislation that Senator Hatch and I introduced. Many members of the committee have contributed to it – the bill to reauthorize and strengthen the Community Health Centers and the National Health Service Corps.

Both of these programs provide indispensable assistance to low-income patients and underserved communities throughout the nation. From Indian reservations to inner city clinics, these two programs make a large difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

Under the legislation, community health centers will be able to serve about 8 million additional patients, from the current 16 million to 24 million by 2012. I thank Senator Hatch, Senator Enzi, Senator Sanders and many other members of our committee for their strong commitment to this important proposal.

We're also taking an important step in what I hope can be a comprehensive approach to improving cancer care by considering Senator Reed's legislation on childhood cancer. I know that Senator Enzi has some concerns on the effect of the legislation on NIH, and I look forward to a good debate on that point.

I also thank our Majority Leader, Senator Reid for his legislation on ALS - Lou Gehrig's disease. Better tracking of the prevalence of this disorder will give doctors new insights into its causes and treatment.

I commend Senator Dodd, Senator Hatch, Senator Clinton and others for their important work on screening newborn babies for inherited disorders, and I commend Senator Brown for his important proposal on TB. I also want to thank Senator Burr for his proposal to improve the chimpanzee sanctuary that our committee established under the leadership of Senator Jeffords several years ago.

The Committee will now proceed to the consideration of the first item on the agenda.

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