

Testimony of
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United States Department of Health & Human Services

Before the
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

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Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss my nomination to be the Secretary of Health and Human Services. I am honored that President Obama has nominated me for this position, and it is a privilege to be considered by this Committee.

I want to thank the Members of this Committee and your staff for taking the time to meet with me over the course of the last few weeks and for continuing to share your views. If confirmed, I look forward to working together closely on our shared priorities for the Department of Health and Human Services.

I am especially grateful for my husband and children for their tremendous support, especially as I seek to take on this new role. And while my parents could not be here with us today, I also want to recognize them for instilling within me the enduring value of public service.

As a second-generation Greek immigrant, I was raised to be thankful for the gifts that this great nation gave to me and to my parents before me. Throughout my childhood in Hinton, West Virginia, my father, an optometrist and small business owner, and my mother, a teacher, were both engaged in service through our community and church.

And so, with this core commitment to service and passion for impact, I am humbled and excited by this next challenge. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside the remarkable men and women of the Department to continue to ensure that children, families, and seniors have the building blocks of healthy and productive lives.

These issues are fundamental to all of us – whether it is the chronic condition of a child we love, the safety of the food we eat every day, or improving quality, lowering cost and expanding access in our healthcare system – so I respect and appreciate the importance of the challenges before us. I am committed to an open dialogue on priorities for the Department and our shared goal of delivering impact for the American people.

Commitment to Impact

As the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and throughout my career in both the public and private sectors, I have had the opportunity to lead large and complex organizations and work across a range of issues. In each of my roles, I have focused on building strong teams, forging relationships, and delivering results. As Chief Operating Officer and later President for

Global Development at the Gates Foundation, I had the opportunity to work on some of the world's most pressing challenges, from agricultural productivity to healthcare in the developing world. As the President of the WalMart Foundation, I led our efforts to fight hunger in America, leveraging Walmart's presence in local communities to reach millions of people across the country to best maximize our impact. And as a member of the board at a university hospital and Fortune 50 insurance company, I gained firsthand experience into healthcare delivery and insurance markets – and how both can work better for businesses and families.

In my role as OMB Director, I have worked closely with members of this committee and others – both Democrats and Republicans – to support efforts to return to a more orderly budget and appropriations process. The enactment of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 represented important steps toward replacing damaging sequestration cuts with sensible long-term reforms and investing in key areas of innovation, education, and infrastructure to help grow our economy, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class. Throughout my tenure, I have made responsiveness to and engagement with Congress a priority – working with members on both sides of the aisle to drive towards progress on the issues we all care deeply about.

The Work of the Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services touches Americans at every age, from every background, in every part of our country. As we meet here today, scientists and researchers at the National Institutes of Health are working to find cures for some of our world's most serious diseases – and experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are working to prevent them from spreading. The Food & Drug Administration is protecting the safety of the food we eat and the medications our doctors prescribe us. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality is researching ways to improve the care we receive and identify causes of racial and ethnic disparities in health so we can work to eliminate them. These talented men and women are not only among the best in their fields, they are among the best in the world.

Our parents and grandparents rely on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and millions of our children benefit from Head Start and the work of the Administration for Children & Families. Meanwhile, millions of Americans are living with dignity in their own communities, thanks to the Administration for Community Living.

Throughout our country, one in five adults experiences mental illness. Our neighbors are supported by the behavioral health and substance use services provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. And the largest expansion of behavioral health coverage in a generation is finally delivering on parity between mental and physical health coverage.

Tens of millions of people living in underserved communities – from rural America to Indian Country to America's inner cities – are accessing quality care, regardless of their ability to pay, thanks to the Health Resources & Services Administration and the Indian Health Services.

The Department's work to ensure accessible, affordable, quality healthcare through the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is making a positive difference in the lives of our families and our communities, while strengthening the economy. Because of the law, millions of Americans now have new benefits, new protections, and new health coverage. The Congressional Budget Office recently affirmed that the ACA is working to lower healthcare cost growth, make individual market premiums affordable, increase coverage, and reduce the Federal deficit.

Together, all this work forms the foundation of a stronger middle class, a more prosperous economy, and healthier communities.

Conclusion

If confirmed, I will work to continue to build on this progress. Understanding the complexity and significance of the challenges that lie ahead, I will approach my work at the Department with three guiding tenets – driving solutions for the issues we all care deeply about; building teams with the talent and focus we need to implement against our objectives; and strengthening relationships to make progress on the wide variety of issues at the Department that transcend parties, and will ultimately transcend our generation.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the invitation to speak with you today. I have valued the conversations we have had to date, and I am hopeful that we will have the opportunity to continue to work together closely to engage on some of the most pressing issues this nation faces today and to best support the health and wellness of the American people.

With that, I would be pleased to answer your questions.