

**U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Hearing on “The History and Current Reality of the U.S. Health Care  
System”**

**September 6, 2017**

**Ranking Member Claire McCaskill**

**Opening Statement**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During a Finance Committee hearing back in June, I called for bipartisan hearings on healthcare reform. Unfortunately, there was never an opportunity to participate in hearings in the Senate on the Better Care Reconciliation Act or on any other Republican health care repeal or replacement plan before they were brought to the floor, in July. I appreciate that several committees are now holding open, bipartisan hearings addressing health care. This is a huge step forward. I hope that today marks the beginning of a return to regular order in the Senate and kicks off a new era in which we work to seek bipartisan solutions to the health care system and the many other challenges facing our nation.

In June, I also acknowledged that Democrats made mistakes when we passed the Affordable Care Act, and I value the opportunity to address some of those shortcomings. The ACA was a complicated piece of legislation that was designed to fill gaps and provide coverage to individuals that did not have access to affordable

health care coverage. Although the ACA is far from perfect, it succeeded in providing health care coverage to more than 20 million Americans. In August, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the uninsured rate remains at historically low levels – only 8.8 percent of Americans are uninsured. But there is still much work to do – we need to build on these gains and ensure that more people have access to affordable health care coverage.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the giant elephant in the room – the immediate concerns affecting the individual market. In less than two months, Americans are scheduled to begin enrolling in 2018 plans on the individual market. And in order for that to successfully happen, we need to act today. First and foremost, we must take steps to stabilize the individual market. I held over 25 town halls in Missouri in August, and I heard from my fellow Missourians that they are extremely concerned about what will happen to their healthcare next year and want to know what can be done about rising health care costs.

Fortunately, for those in the individual market, there is an easy answer on how to help address concerns over uncertainty in the market and rising premiums, and that is for the Administration to commit to making cost sharing reduction (CSR) payments. Experts on both sides of the aisle agree that the uncertainty surrounding the future of CSR payments is causing instability in the individual market. The individual market depends on the voluntary participation of health insurance

providers. If the insurance companies that do participate in the exchanges do not receive CSR payments, they will find a way to offset the increased costs. For many of these companies, that will mean increasing premiums by an additional 20% in the individual market, or simply declining to participate in the exchanges at all.

We should not miss the opportunity to address the immediate problem before us—we must stabilize the individual marketplace and incentivize providers' participation in the exchanges by making the CSR payments permanent.

Even so, stabilization of the individual market is only one piece of the puzzle. The fact remains that health care costs are rising, and more and more Americans are concerned about access to affordable, quality health care. We all know that high drug prices and the lack of price transparency for health care services are significant cost drivers. Americans struggle to get answers to a relatively simple question: How much does this cost? We should make it easier for folks to get answers to that question. We also have to address high drug prices, which are driving up health insurance premiums and forcing too many people to choose between buying their medication and paying their bills.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from our witnesses who spend every day working to understand the complex nature of our health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.