

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies**

**Subcommittee Markup of the FY2017 Labor, Health and Human Services,
and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill**

June 7, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

This is the first bipartisan Senate Labor-HHS bill in seven years. I think it is important for the Appropriations Committee to work together, find common ground and shared priorities, and move bills to the President's desk. I want to thank Senator Murray for working with me towards this goal on, arguably, one of the most challenging appropriations bills. I also ask all Subcommittee Members to hold their amendments until Full Committee markup on Thursday.

The fiscal year 2017 Labor-HHS bill is \$270 million less than last year. This required the Subcommittee to make difficult decisions about funding levels and to consider the appropriate role and jurisdiction of Federal programs. Yet, even in a year with considerable fiscal constraints, we were able to focus the bill on preserving core activities and funding programs that provide the most benefit to all Americans.

Let me highlight three:

First, the bill provides a \$2 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I believe that every dollar we spend should reflect the priorities of the American people.

I can think of no greater priority than to give hope to families battling life-threatening diseases and to help more Americans live longer, healthier lives. Last year when we increased NIH by \$2 billion, the first significant increase in this bill in over a decade, I made clear that sustained funding was as important as the increased investment. A pattern begins in the second year, and we have seized the opportunity this year to begin a pattern of increases for the NIH.

Second, the Labor-HHS bill restores "Year Round Pell." This expanded eligibility and flexibility allows students to receive an additional Pell grant award during an academic year, typically during the summer, if they take additional coursework.

"Year Round Pell" will help students stay on track for graduation, accelerate program completion by taking courses year-round, and, ultimately, enter or re-enter the workforce sooner and graduate with less debt. This will provide an estimated 1 million students next school year, on average, an additional \$1,650, to help pay for college.

Third, in response to the rising rates of opioid abuse nationwide, we have increased funding for treatment and prevention programs funded in this bill by 93 percent. It is estimated that 1.9 million adults in the U.S. have an opioid use disorder related to prescription pain relievers, and 586,000 have an opioid use disorder related to heroin.

To stop the spread of further opioid abuse, the bill provides \$261 million to fight both prescription opioid and heroin abuse. When combined with mandatory funding for Community Health Centers, the Department of Health and Human Services will have access to \$355 million in fiscal year 2017 to specifically target opioid abuse prevention and treatment. In addition, states continue to have access to over \$1.8 billion from the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant.

Finally, the Committee recommendation provides increases for many other important programs, including:

- Title I, IDEA, and a new Title IV block grant at the Department of Education;
- Children’s Hospital Graduate Medical Education, Head Start, and the Child Care Development Block Grant at the Department of Health and Human Services;
- Job Corps at the Department of Labor.

And maintains funding for core programs, that benefit every state, including:

- LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program);
- Community Services Block Grant;
- And the Hospital Preparedness Program.

The bill also constrains executive overreach by including language to limit “regulation by memo” as well as prohibiting OSHA from imposing new and costly enforcement regulations related to farm fertilizers.

I want to thank Senator Murray for her help in determining priorities, deciding how to best use limited resources, and working towards a common goal. Even in this difficult fiscal environment, we were able to come together and write a bill that addresses the most important priorities for Americans.

Thank you. I now recognize Senator Murray for her opening statement.

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