

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

**Hearing to Review the FY2018 Budget Request
for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

June 15, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. Thank you, Secretary Price, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Department of Health and Human Services' fiscal year 2018 budget request. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

This year's budget request for the Labor/HHS Subcommittee is reduced by \$24 billion. The Department of Health and Human Services takes \$15.1 billion of those cuts, or a reduction of about one-fifth from the Department's current funding level. This has placed your budget under great financial restraints.

I agree that there are many places in the Department's budget we should look to for savings. You bring a new viewpoint to the HHS budget and I hope we can work together to identify programs that are ineffective or no longer needed and put that funding to better use elsewhere.

However, as the budget request stands today, I am concerned about its path forward. The proposal cuts the National Institutes of Health by \$7.5 billion, eliminates funding for LIHEAP, and reduces funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by \$1.2 billion. Looking at the history of this Subcommittee and the benefits of many of these programs, I believe it's unlikely this Subcommittee will support these specific and significant funding reductions and eliminations.

In particular, I want to be clear that, as Chairman of this Subcommittee, I will not write a bill this year that reduces funding for the National Institutes of Health. As you are aware, this Subcommittee has spent the last two years making NIH a priority by providing back to back funding increases. NIH funding is important for those individuals suffering from life-threatening illnesses, as well as for the American taxpayer who pays for many of these individuals' care through Medicare and Medicaid. I will not erase the gains we have made over the past two years.

It is important to remember that Congress is not a rubber stamp for the President's budget request—from either party. Every President's budget request has concerning aspects and

often issues that we cannot support. The last time we voted on President Obama's budget on the floor in fiscal year 2016, it failed by a vote of 98-1.

Simply put, I think this is a starting place for negotiations. While I appreciate the Department prioritizing limited resources, this hearing is an opportunity for us to fully understand whether you made many of these cuts because you believe these programs are ineffective and not necessary or because your topline budget level forced you to do so.

My goal is for us to work together to identify priorities and find common ground while responsibly allocating taxpayers' resources.

Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing your testimony today and appreciate your dialogue with us about these important issues.

Thank you.

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