



For Immediate Release
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**Opening Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
at Today's Mark-Up of the America's Healthy Future Act**

Harry S Truman said:

"Men make history, and not the other way around. . . . Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better."

My Colleagues, this is our opportunity to make history. Our actions here, this week, will determine whether we are courageous and skillful enough to seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

Presidents from Truman to Johnson, from Nixon to Clinton, have had the courage to attempt health care reform.

Once again, the time has come to make the attempt. The time has come to have the courage to take on this daunting task. The time has come to reform America's health care.

The times demand nothing less.

Just last week, a Harvard study found that every year in America, lack of health coverage leads to 45,000 deaths. People without health insurance have a 40 percent higher risk of death than those with private health insurance.

No one should die because they cannot afford health care. This bill would fix that.

Every 30 seconds, another American files for bankruptcy after a serious health problem. Every year, about one and one-half million families lose their homes to foreclosure because of unaffordable medical costs.

No one should go bankrupt because they get sick. This bill would fix that.

A new Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that the health-care coverage for the average family now costs more than \$13,000 a year.

If current trends continue, by 2019, the average family plan will cost more than \$30,000.

No one should have to live in fear of financial ruin from increasing insurance premiums. This bill would fix that.

The mark before us today is a balanced, common-sense plan that takes the best ideas from both sides. It's designed to get the 60 votes that it needs to pass.

Now the choice is up to us. Now the question is whether we can seize the opportunity and change things for the better.

All Americans should have access to affordable, quality health care coverage. The Congressional Budget Office says that this bill would raise the share of Americans with insurance coverage from about 83 percent to about 94 percent. CBO says that this bill would deliver coverage to 25 million people through new insurance exchanges and to another 11 million more through Medicaid.

Our proposal would dramatically increase prevention and wellness. It would begin shifting health care delivery to the quality of care provided, not the quantity of services rendered. It would lower prescription drug costs dramatically for seniors.

It would reform the insurance market. It would protect those with pre-existing conditions. It would prevent insurance companies from discriminating and capping coverage. And it would require insurance companies to renew policies as long as policyholders pay their premiums. No longer would insurance companies be able to drop coverage when people get sick.

These reforms would give Americans real savings. CBO tells us that the rating reforms and exchanges in our proposal would significantly lower premiums in the individual market.

Under our plan, everyone making less than 133 percent of the poverty level would receive health coverage through Medicaid. And our plan would provide tax credits to help low- and middle-income families to buy private insurance coverage.

These tax credits would mean that our bill would deliver tax cuts for those whom it affects. Overall, taxes would go down for the people affected by this bill. These tax credits would help to make insurance more affordable.

And despite what some might say, this is no "government takeover" of health care. We have built our plan on an exchange marketplace that allows choice among private health insurance company products. People would be able to choose their own plans. Our plan does not include a public option. We did not include an employer mandate. And we paid for every cent.

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This is a uniquely American solution. We are not Canada. We are not Britain. We are America.

Americans have a tradition of balance. We don't buy into government-only solutions. But we do believe in rules of the road.

We have a tradition of mixed solutions. We have a tradition of compromise. We have a tradition of balance. This is a balanced package.

And our package is fiscally balanced, as well. It starts reducing the deficit within 10 years. By the end of the 10-year window, it's moving in the right direction.

And our package would control health care spending in the long run. CBO says that in the second 10 years, our bill would continue to reduce the deficit by half a percent of GDP. That's about \$800 to \$900 billion in deficit reduction.

Now it comes down to this Committee. The other four Committees have acted. Now it is our turn.

Last week, I put out my proposal. But I don't pretend that it's the last word. I'm eager to work with other Senators to make this an even better bill.

That's why, this morning, I am going to make several significant modifications to the chairman's mark. These modifications will include ideas from a number of Senators on the Committee. These modifications will improve and strengthen the package.

And now I look forward to our amendment process here in the committee. Through this open and democratic process, I hope that we can improve the bill even further.

After that, I look forward to melding our bill with the Health Committee's product. And I look forward to a constructive floor debate starting as early as next week.

On one point, I want to acknowledge up front that we did not do as much to correct the payment of doctors under the incredibly misnamed "Sustainable Growth Rate." The SGR needs to be fixed permanently. I look forward to going further as the bill progresses through the process.

And so, let us begin our consideration of this important bill.

Let us make this a time for progress. Let us seize our opportunity to make history. And let us do our part to make quality, affordable health care available to all Americans.

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