

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

**Hearing to review to Review the FY2017 Budget Request & Budget Justification  
for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

**March 3, 2016**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. Thank you, Secretary Burwell, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Department of Health and Human Services' FY2017 budget request. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

We have many shared priorities in this budget proposal – cancer research, combatting opioid abuse, and increasing access to mental health care. However, I was disappointed that many of these important investments were not part of the discretionary budget request to be considered by the Appropriations Committee.

This is a precarious budget submission for the Department. The request leans heavily on new, mandatory spending proposals to bypass current budget caps. It cuts almost \$2 billion for programs currently funded by discretionary spending in the Labor/HHS bill, and expects new, unauthorized mandatory funding to fill those holes.

Instead of making the difficult decisions necessary to prioritize funding, the Department of Health and Human Services made the risky decision to move numerous programs out of the annual appropriations process without knowing whether there is a path forward for mandatory funding this year.

How is the Subcommittee supposed to interpret the Administration's priorities when the discretionary request makes deep cuts to many programs important to the health and well-being of all Americans? If mandatory funding does not materialize, is this really the request you want the Subcommittee to consider this year?

Further, the Administration-proposed funding increases can only be achieved through this altered budget reality in which mandatory funding offsets reductions to discretionary programs.

My overarching concern is whether the Department is truly prepared for a FY2017 Labor/HHS bill that only takes into consideration the discretionary funding you requested. If this Subcommittee accepted the Department's request, this would mean a \$1 billion cut to the National Institutes of Health. Funding would be eliminated to our nation's Children's hospitals. And mental health activities would be reduced.

While I strongly disagree with the Department's approach, I know there are many programs that we all support such as Alzheimer's research, funding to combat the opioid epidemic, and precision medicine. It is my hope we can work together on finding common ground within the

budget caps. I believe there is a path forward in the Labor/HHS bill to prioritize funding for these critical programs.

I look forward to working with you, Madam Secretary, Senator Murray, and other Members to identify priorities and make the best decisions for the American taxpayer.

Thank you.

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