

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

Chairman Andrews Statement at Subcommittee Hearing on “Health Care Reform: Recommendations to Improve Coordination of Federal and State Initiatives”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, for a subcommittee hearing on “Health Care Reform: Recommendations to Improve Coordination of Federal and State Initiatives”*

Good afternoon and welcome to the Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee hearing today entitled “*Health Care Reform: Recommendations to Improve Coordination of Federal and State Initiatives.*” This is part II of the HELP Subcommittee’s hearing series on solutions to covering the uninsured. During our last hearing, we heard testimony from several health care policy experts regarding various states’ innovative ideas to address the problem of the uninsured. In this hearing, we will hear directly from several state officials regarding their state’s health care initiatives and the challenges federal law presents to them. In addition, we will hear from several Members of Congress regarding a proposal that would establish a commission to provide certain waivers and grants to states who want to increase health care.

The purpose of today’s hearing is to address the question of whether the federal government should provide states with waivers from the federal law known as the Employee Income Retirement Security Act (ERISA) in order to meaningfully implement their state health care initiatives. Although ERISA’s original intent was to establish minimum funding and vesting standard for pension plans, its effect has created an unintended consequence that prohibits states from regulating employer-sponsored health plans.

While the United States spends over \$1.6 trillion on health care annually, which represents over 15% of our Gross Domestic Product, we nevertheless remain the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee health care for all of our citizens. Today, with over 46 million Americans still without health insurance, Congress and states need to work together, now more than ever, to provide a solution to this dilemma. Whether we establish a national healthcare model or provide states with the necessary flexibility to implement smart, effective health care initiatives or devise a plan that improves coordination of federal and state health care initiatives, the time to do so is now. I look forward to hearing our witnesses’ testimony today and the healthy debate we will have regarding a problem that has been ignored for far too long.

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