

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
Hearing on “Medicaid Oversight: Existing Problems and Ways to Strengthen  
the Program”  
January 31, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to the first E&C hearing of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. Today, we are taking a closer look at the Medicaid program to ensure the program is operating effectively, that Americans who are eligible for the program have access to, and actually receive, the quality care that they deserve, and that tax dollars are spent appropriately.

In Fiscal Year 2015, total spending of the Medicaid program was \$509 billion, 62 percent of that was paid for by the federal government. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the federal share of Medicaid spending is expected to rise significantly over the next decade.

While Medicaid provides coverage to millions of low-income and disabled Americans, the program is not immune to challenges – including increasing costs, fraud, and errors with eligibility determination that result in millions of wasted taxpayer dollars. Meanwhile, some of America’s most frail and needy citizens remain on waiting lists. We need to ensure that eligible beneficiaries of the program have access to high quality care, while being good stewards of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

This hearing is an important part of the continued oversight that our committee, the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office have conducted over this vast program.

All of us here today agree that Medicaid is an essential program for the population that it serves. With Medicaid expansion, and the rapid growth of the program, we can't shy away from asking the tough questions. Program integrity and oversight are vital to ensure we don't get stuck in an 'auto-pilot' spending pattern that doesn't serve the beneficiaries of the program by improving their overall health outcomes.

We look forward to a productive dialogue with our witnesses today, to discuss the troubling findings in the reports and audits conducted by the GAO and HHS OIG. We also hope to examine the effects that Medicaid expansion has had on states' budgets and beneficiaries.

Tomorrow, our Health Subcommittee will hold a hearing focused on solutions to fix some of the problems plaguing the Medicaid program. And on Thursday, our Health Subcommittee will examine insurance reforms. It's an important first week back in the hearing room as we explore ways to rebuild our health care system.

I would like to thank the witnesses for testifying today and look forward to hearing from this distinguished panel.

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