

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Health Subcommittee Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2017 HHS Budget”
February 24, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Secretary Burwell, welcome back to the committee. Although we do have our policy differences, the professionalism that you have brought to the job is appreciated. I know you were in Michigan last week regarding the tragic Flint water crisis. I thank you for your attention and look forward to closely working together to ensure we make it up to the residents of Flint for the many unacceptable failures that have occurred at all levels.

We have also enjoyed our partnership in 21st Century Cures. You and your team have been terrific during this over 2-year effort, working closely and providing valuable insight and guidance as we developed a bill that achieved 344 votes in the House. The momentum is building as the Senate has taken real and bipartisan steps forward through their parallel Innovation project. With a little more hard work, and bipartisan cooperation, we will be able to get this done for patients across the country looking for hope for safer cures.

We were excited with President Obama tasking Vice President Biden to lead a “moonshot” effort to cure cancer. The leadership of the vice president will surely bring a jolt of energy for this important project - the goals of which are consistent with the bill passed by the House last summer. It is important to remember that time is a precious resource, especially for countless patients across the country who can’t wait for another task force. They need action. They need cures now.

It is my belief, shared by Chairman Alexander, that the way for policy to be enacted is through the 21st Century Cures Act and the Senate’s Innovation project. We’ve done the hard, time-consuming work of listening, soliciting ideas, and listening some more. The legwork is done, and as I mentioned, with 344 votes in the House, the policies have been pressure tested. We look forward to combining our efforts and the vice president’s best ideas into one unified bill to improve our health care innovation ecosystem. We have an incredible opportunity – let’s be sure that we deliver.

This hearing also gives us an opportunity to discuss the important work of putting our fiscal house in order. An astounding \$1 trillion now flows through HHS. We have significant concerns that our budgetary path is on a dangerous trajectory toward disaster. Under this budget, the national debt will more than double what it was when President Obama took office. The projections cannot be ignored, especially as health and entitlement spending will be the main factor in driving additional debt on top of future generations. We can and must do better.

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