

The Honorable Debbie Dingell
Statement on House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health Hearing
“Examining the Financing and Delivery of Long-Term Care in the U.S.”

March 1, 2016

Today’s hearing is an opportunity to begin a serious conversation about the pressing need to address the financing and delivery of long-term care in the United States. I want to thank my good friend Congressman Frank Pallone, the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, for submitting this statement on my behalf.

Our nation faces a rapidly-aging population which will require increased access to long-term services and supports (LTSS). LTSS is unique and different from most health services, which includes helping people with activities of daily living like eating, bathing and getting dressed. The demand for these services is expected to double in the next 40 years as our nation continues to age. In 2014 alone, our country spent approximately \$340 billion on LTSS, and this number will only continue to rise in the future.

Today’s system for providing LTSS is fragmented, uncoordinated and expensive. The lack of comprehensive and integrated long-term care programs results in poor health outcomes for patients and places undue burdens on family caregivers. There is not a single place where people can find answers to their questions regarding long-term care and other services. Families are often unclear about where they can receive the care they or a loved one needs at an affordable cost. The lack of clarity and resources makes coordination of care difficult, discourages efficiency and promotes uncertainty among individuals seeking care.

Many in Washington talk about this issue as a looming catastrophe resulting from an aging population. But we should think of it as an opportunity to create a new paradigm for caring for our seniors and people with disabilities. Several well-respected outside groups have come forward with serious proposals that deserve the attention of this committee and the entire Congress. Reforming our long-term care system is not only the right thing to do for our seniors and people with disabilities, but it can help improve the efficiency of our health care system while also saving money in the long run. I stand ready to work with my colleagues on common sense proposals to improve the financing and delivery of long-term care in this country and I hope this hearing is just the beginning of a serious national discussion on this important issue.