

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Health
“Examining the Extension of Special Needs Plans”
Wednesday, July 26, 2017

This morning we have a distinguished panel of witnesses to discuss the ways the committee can improve Special Needs Plans in Medicare Advantage as Congress looks to extend the authority for this program in the coming months. Special Needs Plans, or SNPs (*pronounced “SNIPS”*) are private health care plans providing Medicare benefits to some of our most vulnerable beneficiaries. These are elderly beneficiaries who are in care facilities, who have chronic conditions or diseases, and who are low-income and are enrolled in Medicaid.

As a committee with jurisdiction over both Medicare and Medicaid, we have a special obligation to thoughtfully examine this unique opportunity to not only extend the SNPs authority, but to make refinements to policy which can improve the ability of states and plans to provide needed care to millions of beneficiaries. As we embark on our effort, we recognize and appreciate the good bipartisan committee work that has preceded us – efforts by our colleagues in the Senate and in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Today, we complement previous efforts by hearing from experts and releasing draft legislation. Our bipartisan goal is to extend and enhance the program in a manner that encourages integrated, coordinated health care coverage.

We want to ensure health care plans and state Medicaid programs have the right incentives and proper tools to offer the best care to vulnerable patients. We also want to help ensure patients have the needed protections and help when navigating health care benefits and accessing care.

We welcome and need stakeholders' feedback on how we can move forward on SNPs in a manner that improves care, enhances quality, and best serves millions of patients. I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here with us today, and I look forward to a productive discussion that will help us move forward on this critical issue.