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## **HELP DEMOCRATS CALL FOR URGENT HEALTH CARE REFORM**

WASHINGTON, DC— Senior Democrats on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a press conference today to discuss *The Affordable Health Choices Act* and the urgent need for health reform that reduces costs, protects choice and guarantees quality, affordable health care for all Americans. Nurses, medical students, and individuals with first-hand experience joined them in support of reforming our broken health care system.

Tomorrow at 10:00am, the HELP Committee will begin to mark-up *The Affordable Health Choices Act* in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 106. The Committee will reconvene Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 in the Russell Caucus Room (SR325). The mark-up is tentatively scheduled to convene each weekday in the Russell Caucus Room until Friday, June 26. It is open to the press and public unless otherwise noted.

“For the health of our economy and the health of our families, health care reform cannot wait, must not wait, and will not wait. We have to get it done, now,” said Senator Dodd. “We owe the working families of this country legislation that cuts costs, protects choice, and ensures affordable, high-quality care. And we intend to deliver.”

“This bill is our opportunity to recreate America as a genuine wellness society – a society that is focused on prevention, good nutrition, fitness, and public health,” Senator Harkin said. “This will save lives. And, as President Obama said yesterday to the AMA, it will also save money. I am genuinely excited about the prevention and wellness elements in the draft bill, heartened by the bipartisan support for this approach and optimistic that we can mark up a bill that is good for the American people and for the fiscal health of government, corporate, and personal budgets.”

“All across America, families are being crushed by rising health care costs. All across America, good-guy businesses are fighting to provide health insurance to their employees, but being crippled by the costs,” Senator Mikulski said. “I’m here today, with my Senate Democratic colleagues to say, the time for health care reform is now. We can’t afford to wait another day. The bill we’ve introduced will lower the high costs of health care, protect people’s choice of doctors, hospitals, and health plans, and ensure all Americans have access to quality, affordable care.”

“More than 45 million Americans lack health insurance, and another 25 million have insurance that doesn’t meet their needs. We now have an historic opportunity to fix our nation’s broken health care system and ensure that all Americans have access to affordable and quality health care,” Senator Bingaman said.

“We have been talking about reforming our health care system for too long—it’s time to act. And I am very excited that we have an historic opportunity right now to reform the system to not

just help people when they are sick, but actively focus on keeping people healthy,” Senator Murray said. “A lot of work has gone into putting this bill together, and I believe it is a strong step forward toward ensuring all Americans can see a doctor when they need one and our long term economic strength is not held captive by the skyrocketing cost of care.”

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