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**HELP DEMOCRATS CALL FOR INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR INDIVIDUALS
WITH PREEXISTING CONDITIONS**

WASHINGTON, DC— Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), 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 need for health reform legislation that enables individuals with pre-existing medical conditions to access quality, affordable health care. They were joined by several local families who have first-hand experience in dealing with health insurance denials based on preexisting conditions.

At 10:00am, the HELP Committee will reconvene to mark-up *The Affordable Health Choices Act* in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 106. The mark-up is tentatively scheduled to reconvene each the rest of the week at 10:00am in the Russell Caucus Room (SR 325). It is open to the press and public.

“Too many Americans with pre-existing conditions find themselves cherry-picked right out of the coverage they desperately need. And people with pre-existing conditions who are lucky enough to be covered are trapped out of fear they won’t be able to find other coverage. That’s unacceptable,” said Dodd. “At a town hall meeting in Connecticut, I met a cancer survivor who now pays as much for her health care as she does for her mortgage since her husband passed away from leukemia. That is why, as a part of reform, we must eliminate practices such as rating based on health status, denying coverage because of a pre-existing medical condition or rescinding a policy after it has already been issued.”

“Currently, the private health insurance system openly discriminates against individuals with a history of illness. This is an especially acute problem for millions of Americans with disabilities,” said Harkin. “The health reform bill we are marking up in the HELP Committee is going to ensure access to affordable, quality care for every American. And it is going to put a stop to a gross injustice in our current health care system: the denial of coverage to people with preexisting conditions.”

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