Opening Statement
Nomination Hearing for Mr. Gerard "Chris" Klomp
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
Chairman Bill Cassidy, M.D.
September 16th, 2026

Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for considering my nomination to serve as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I am grateful to President Trump for nominating me, to Secretary Kennedy for his trust, and to my fellow public servants across HHS and CMS for their dedication to service.

Most importantly, I thank my wife, Elise, and our four young children for their love and sacrifice. This journey began in part because we wanted to teach our children about Americans who answered the call to serve. We are profoundly grateful for the privilege of now doing the same.

Health care became personal to me long before it became my profession.

When I was thirteen, I lost my mother to cancer following an experimental treatment for severe rheumatoid arthritis that caused a cellular mutation. Her care was also marked by medical error. I was young, grieving, and angry, and for a time, I carried a chip on my shoulder about health care.

At the same time, my father, a physician, was teaching me something very different. Being a healer is among the highest callings, and caring for someone in a moment of vulnerability is an extraordinary privilege.

Those two experiences lived side by side in me: an understanding of how profoundly our health care system can fail people, and an equally powerful appreciation for the good that dedicated healers can accomplish.

Years later, as a missionary in Eastern Europe, I saw suffering where health care lagged far behind ours. That experience deepened my faith and clarified my purpose: to be my brother's keeper and to draw people closer to God. Together, these experiences made HHS's mission deeply personal to me: preventing harm, alleviating suffering, and helping healers save lives.

I did not become a physician. Instead, I found my calling in building organizations that empower good people to do extraordinary things. Across business and public service, I have been entrusted with increasingly consequential opportunities to earn trust and exercise judgment for others. Those experiences taught me that leadership is ultimately an exercise in stewardship.

The need for that stewardship is urgent. Nearly one in five dollars in our economy goes to health care, yet three in four adults live with a chronic condition. Too many Americans are sick, and too many struggle to obtain care. We cannot afford to confuse more health care with better health. The best and least expensive care is the care we never need because we remain healthy.

Those realities define our mission:

First, we must make America healthier by preventing chronic disease, restoring trust, and asking and answering difficult questions.

Second, we must make health care more affordable, accessible, and effective by rewarding better outcomes and replacing incentives that fail patients or taxpayers.

Third, we must make HHS operate with excellence by giving public servants clear missions, modern tools, appropriate authority, and accountability for results.

As Deputy Secretary, my responsibility would be to translate mission into execution by aligning people, policy, technology, and resources around results. Leading Medicare and helping oversee HHS operations has reinforced that government makes progress when it sets clear objectives, empowers talented people, measures results, and follows the evidence. Operational excellence is how policy becomes service.

I approach these challenges with optimism. HHS is full of extraordinary healers, scientists, innovators, caregivers, and public servants. Our task is to unleash that extraordinary capacity against the most pressing health challenges facing our country.

That responsibility demands humility.

It demands sound judgment.

And it demands careful stewardship.

Leadership begins with earning trust: listening, confronting difficult facts, respecting differing perspectives, acting with integrity, and accepting responsibility. Leaders come and go, but institutions endure. The test of stewardship is not what we inherit; it is what we leave behind.

A healthier America is not a partisan aspiration. It is a national obligation. We may disagree profoundly about policy, but we should share that goal. If confirmed, I will work constructively with this Committee, tell you candidly what I believe to be true, respect Congress's responsibilities, and work toward those shared ends.

Confirmation by the Senate is itself an extraordinary act of trust. If fortunate enough to receive that trust, I will work every day to earn it, with gratitude, faith in our shared capacity to solve difficult problems, and joy in serving the American people.

And I hope our children, and those who come after them, will look back on this chapter and see that we answered the call to serve with integrity, competence, and civility, and left them a healthier country.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.