

**Opening Statement of Vivek Hallegere Murthy  
Nominee to be Surgeon General,  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
February 4, 2014**

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored and grateful for the opportunity to appear before you as nominee for the position of Surgeon General.

With the Committee's indulgence, I am proud to introduce my family who is here supporting me today. My mother, Mrs. Myetraie Murthy, my father Dr. Hallegere Murthy, and my sister, Dr. Rashmi Murthy.

Our family, like so many before us, has been fortunate to live the American Dream. I am the son of immigrant parents who came to this country with little money and few possessions but with a commitment to work hard and build a better life for their children. My grandfather was a poor farmer who fought for democracy and freedom in India and who never could have dreamed that his grandson would have the opportunity to sit before you today to be considered for the position of Surgeon General.

From an early age, my parents instilled in me the core values of service, education, and health. I spent many weekends helping in my father's medical clinic, and it was there that I came to see what medicine could be like in its best moments: an opportunity for a doctor and patient to come together and create a mutually therapeutic bond. These early experiences inspired my own life's work.

To be considered for the position of Surgeon General is an extraordinary honor that comes with the sacred responsibility to improve the health of our nation. The Surgeon General is charged with providing the public with the best possible scientific information to improve health; leading the talented men and women in our Public Health Service Commissioned Corps; and chairing the National Prevention Council.

I respectfully submit that my experience working to improve health has given me the skills and perspective to be an effective Surgeon General. As someone who has cared for patients in the hospital, conducted research in the laboratory, and built public health programs in the community, I can help forge partnerships between these worlds and build bridges between younger and older generations to address the biggest health care challenges that face our nation. Using 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches and technology, I hope my tenure, if I am confirmed as Surgeon General, will be one where we marshal partnerships across the country to address the epidemics of obesity and tobacco related disease, to reduce the crippling stigma of mental illness, to rollback the resurgence of vaccine preventable disease, and to make prevention and health promotion the backbone of our communities.

Over the course of my career, I have been associated with some of our nation's finest universities and hospitals during my time at Harvard, Yale and Brigham and Women's Hospital, initially as a student of biochemistry, management, and medicine, and later as a physician and educator.

As a physician, I have cared for patients of all backgrounds with a range of illnesses from diabetes and cardiovascular disease to cancer and infections, and I have witnessed firsthand the challenges our patients face. I have seen the power of medical science, but have also learned how much health is determined outside the walls of the hospitals in our communities where we need stronger partnerships around prevention.

As a researcher, I have worked in the laboratory on vaccine development and studied the access of women and minorities to clinical trials. I have a keen understanding of the importance of science and innovation in improving health outcomes.

As a teacher, I am aware of the issues confronting the next generation of doctors as they embark on a life dedicated to patient care.

As a public health educator, I created HIV/AIDS education programs for tens of thousands of youth through an organization I co-founded called VISIONS. I built a rural community health partnership in India called Swasthya to train young women to be health care educators and leaders. Through these experiences, I learned how to conceive and execute community-wide health projects that respected cultural and geographic differences.

As an organizational leader, I co-founded a national medical organization, Doctors for America, comprising thousands of physicians in all 50 states, in order to strengthen dialogue between physicians, patients, and policy makers about pressing health matters. In this capacity, I managed thousands of inspiring volunteers and brought together diverse stakeholders for a common goal of improving health.

As a national leader in prevention, I have served on the Advisory Group to the National Prevention Council and helped inform and share the nation's first National Prevention Strategy.

And as an entrepreneur and innovator, I co-founded and helped build a successful software technology company, TrialNetworks, that has harnessed the power of information technology to improve research collaboration and the efficiency of clinical trials around the world.

These foundational experiences have given me the opportunity to view health through a variety of lenses and have grounded me in science, research, medicine, and public health.

I believe the future of public health demands that we remove the walls separating our health delivery systems and our communities and ensure that all institutions in society play a role in prevention and health promotion. If given the opportunity to serve as Surgeon General, I would build strong partnerships between our delivery systems and the faith based groups, local businesses, and other stakeholders in our community in order to do three things:

- (1) provide the public with scientifically-based information on issues such as obesity, diet, physical activity, and tobacco cessation;
- (2) implement community-driven public health initiatives based on scientific evidence and cultural norms; and
- (3) assess the efficacy of current and new strategies in collaboration with the research community.

I will also focus on leading the National Prevention Council to assure all agencies of the federal government are supporting individuals in making healthier choices, and I will dedicate myself to leading the committed, talented men and women in our Commissioned Corps who work hard to advance public health every day.

I believe that our nation's strength has always come from its people. They are and will always be our most valuable resource. Improving the health of our people means strengthening the nation. If given the opportunity and honor to serve as America's Surgeon General, this will be my highest priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to be considered for this important position.