

**SENATOR JOHN BREAUX  
OPENING STATEMENT**

**"Assisted Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Examining its Role on the Continuum of Care"**

Improved technology and health care will allow most of us to live longer than previous generations. This is a mixed blessing because we get the obvious benefit of adding years to our lives. On the other hand, we face the challenges of needed assistance with long-term care when we are no longer self-sufficient. Our nation's seniors often tell us that they want to have options as their needs increase and they reach a point when they can no longer be cared for at home. And, the 77 million baby boomers -- a very informed generation by all accounts -- will also demand more long-term care options as they age.

So what options currently exist? For some, skilled nursing homes are the facilities best suited to meet their care needs. But no longer are nursing homes the sole option for those of us who will need assistance down the road--we now have in place, a "continuum of care," or a spectrum of options available. We have seen the recent proliferation of such long-term care providers as adult day care and adult foster care. But the residential option that has grown the most markedly in recent years is assisted living. To get a better sense of the current state of quality care in assisted living I have called for today's hearing, "Assisted Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Examining its Role on the Continuum of Care."

This Committee held a hearing two years ago this month to take an initial look at assisted living. At that hearing, the GAO testimony raised questions about the quality of care and the adequacy of consumer protection in assisted living facilities. In the GAO's study of assisted living in four states, data showed that states differ significantly in their statutory language and the requirements they impose on facilities--with some states offering more safeguards than others. At the close of that hearing Senator Grassley and I concluded that state flexibility in this new industry is important but also noted that the GAO report left some unanswered questions.

Today, the Aging Committee is revisiting those unanswered questions. I have called for this hearing not only to get a sense of the progress that both states and the industry have made in the time since our last hearing, but also to gain an understanding of where improvements can still be made. Assisted living offers an exciting option for our nation's seniors as well as for aging baby boomers nationwide. I believe it is incumbent upon this Committee to ensure that as assisted living grows it continues to ensure quality and choice to its residents.

As I said earlier, technology has ensured that most of us can count on adding years to our lives. I want to make sure that we also add life to those years. I trust that today's hearing will get us one step closer to that end.

I thank the witnesses for taking the time to share their experiences with us today.