

**Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl  
Special Committee on Aging Hearing  
Person-Centered Care: Reforming Services and  
Bringing Our Elders Back to the Heart of Society  
July 23, 2008**

Good morning. I'm pleased today to turn the gavel over to my colleague, Senator Casey. While serving as Pennsylvania's Auditor General for eight years, Senator Casey worked to improve the nursing homes in his state, making them safer and exposing holes in state oversight. We're so grateful to have him on the Aging Committee, and pleased that he is holding today's hearing.

The issue we will consider today is one that should seem obvious: when providing someone with health care or long-term care, our first consideration should be that particular individual's needs and desires. This is known as person-centered care. What a simple idea! Unfortunately, our health and long-term care industries have grown so complex that such a straightforward concept has gotten lost and, to some, providing personalized care with the individual senior in mind has become inconvenient.

Twenty-one years ago, Congress passed the landmark nursing home reform law known as OBRA '87. OBRA laid the foundation for person-centered care. Today Senator Casey will examine facilities called "Green Houses" that are successfully implementing person-centered care. We will also hear about the Medical Home model that CMS is exploring, which reorganizes the way that physicians, nurses and others work together to tailor services to each individual. Finally, the committee will explore ways to make it easier for other nursing homes to move toward these model programs.

It's clear that within the realm of long-term care there are many more choices available today than there were twenty years ago. I am very pleased to see this expansion of options, and am hopeful that this trend will continue. The Aging committee has a long and proud history of moving Congress forward on issues of long-term care. Thank you once again, Senator Casey, for taking us a step further with today's hearing.