

Opening Statement
Chairman Bill Nelson
Senate Special Committee on Aging: Protecting Seniors From Medication Labeling Mistakes
December 11, 2013

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today to discuss a topic that is a true consumer protection issue: ensuring that every senior receives the right information at the right time for every prescription drug.

I want to especially thank Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, for bringing this issue to the Committee's attention, and for her many years of tireless work to try and ensure that people are given the information they need to take their drugs safely.

I have to tell you, when I first learned about this issue, I was shocked. Shocked to learn that people can receive up to four different patient leaflets that say different things with one prescription. And I was shocked that the one piece of information written for a consumer for every drug isn't seen or approved by the FDA—ever.

Clearly our current strategy is not working.

Not when Consumer Reports surveys five different pharmacies and finds that the information provided to consumers on the same drug, in four of the five cases, dangerously omitted a warning that violated an FDA regulation.

Our strategy is less than optimal when the FDA says only 75% of patient medication information meet even the minimum criteria for use.

The situation we have here is not only unacceptable, it's dangerous-- especially for seniors who, as we know, often need to take many drugs at once.

We need to do better, and I look forward to hearing how from our witnesses.