

SENATOR JOHN BREAUX

*Opening Statement*

**"The Economic Downturn and Its Impact on Seniors: Stretching Limited Dollars in Medicaid, Health and Senior Services"**

Special Committee on Aging  
March 14, 2002

Good morning and thank you for being here today. This committee has held a series of hearings on long-term care and will continue to examine the questions surrounding financing and delivery of care for older Americans. Today's hearing, which will explore how best to stretch dollars when it comes to services for seniors, is a timely one. I want to thank Ranking Member Craig for calling today's hearing and thereby allowing us to delve into this issue further, as it is clearly one with no easy answers.

In a time of declining state revenues and limited resources at the federal level, states are struggling to find ways to cut costs. States are being forced to make some difficult choices - including cutting back on services affecting seniors. The Medicaid program-which is a primary payor of long-term care - has not been spared from this cost-cutting in the states.

Today we will hear data, demographics, statistics and projections - all of which are necessary to understand the scope of this issue. It is not enough, however, to simply lay out the problem. We are facing a national crisis when it comes to the questions surrounding long-term care. States' financial woes are especially pressing in light of the wave of baby boomers who will be needing long-term care services in the decades ahead. We must continue our dialogue and explore potential solutions, which I plan to do in this Committee's upcoming hearings.

Today's hearing is just one more step in our effort to stimulate debate and discussion regarding how best to reform long-term care for our nation's seniors. I look forward to having our witnesses share their thoughts on this vital and increasingly challenging question. This committee's broader series of hearings and efforts to stimulate discussion hopefully will help us to formulate ideas to ensure that long-term care will be available to each of us should we ever need it.

Thank you.