



May 20th, 2026

Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand's Opening Statement

“Preventing Falls, Preserving Independence: Technology, Community Programs, and Innovation in Senior Safety”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate all our witnesses for being here. Every year, an estimated one in four adults will fall, which can result in injury, hospitalization, and even death.

Today's hearing explores the role technology and innovation can play in senior safety. For example, smartphone apps can assess an older adult's fall risk. In-home sensors can alert caregivers when a loved one falls. Wearable devices can even cushion the blow of a fall.

Before today's hearing, I worked with Senators King and Kim to ask the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, to report on new technologies that provide promise in helping our older adults and people with disabilities live safely and independently. We also asked GAO to examine the challenges older adults face with adopting such new technologies.

We know these challenges are real. For example, technology is expensive. AI can be biased. Communities can lack high speed internet access. There is promise in technology, but its promise does have limits. This means we

cannot stop investing in programs that have a proven track record of working. This includes Federal fall prevention programs authorized by the Older Americans Act, delivered through the Administration of Community Living, as well as the programs afforded by CDC and HUD. Finally, we need to remember how much technology and innovation is built upon Federally funded research.

I look forward to hearing more about the opportunity that this emerging technology plays in keeping our seniors safe, as well as the role of our current successful falls prevention program.

And I would just personally say, I have watched how falls affected my own family members when my great-grandmother fell and broke her hip, which is the story every time, it took a lot of work, effort, using the walker. Using the walker, sometimes you don't graduate from the walker because you never have that confidence again.

Another one of my friends in her 90s, she recently fell, and it kept her indoors for two months until she was fully recovered and could be back on the sidewalks, where they are uneven and where her eyesight is just not strong enough to catch those uneven surfaces.

When my mother-in-law fell, she had such a serious shoulder injury, it took three surgeries to fix it. So I personally know the tragedies and complexities that arise because of falls, and they are life changing. Sometimes your loved one does not regain their capability that they had before the fall. Sometimes the psychological impact of the fall restricts their movement, restricts their ambition, restricts their willingness to travel or explore. It reduces the size of their world. It changes their confidence level. It can affect them emotionally, and physically, and psychologically. So, personally, I know how urgent and important this is, so I am very eager to hear your solutions.