

Good afternoon. Long-term care is an issue that has come up repeatedly in many of our hearings, and it's an issue that many of us have not only a legislative interest in but a personal stake in as well. Many of us have spoken at prior hearings about caring for our parents as well as planning for our own futures to alleviate some of the decisions for our children.

Currently, about twelve million Americans have long-term-care needs — and that number is rising rapidly. All across our country, many middle-class families are going through the same tough choices on how best to care for their elderly parents.

Medicare and most traditional health insurance plans don't cover long-term-care expenses, and while private long-term-care insurance is available, most people don't have it because they see long-term care as something they'll never need.

Additionally, who is going to deliver these long-term care services? Do we have the right workforce? With nursing home costs rising, some families are turning to assisted living facilities or trying to provide care at home. All of these situations raise additional questions and potential challenges.

All of us have heard from constituents about the trade-offs they have made to provide care for their loved ones. For example, Karen from Englewood shared that she is a full-time caregiver for her 79-year old mother who is paralyzed from a stroke. She wrote that "every cent I have goes to helping my mother at home." Her mother cannot cook, clean, or even wash herself.

I'm sure any of my colleagues here could share similar stories as well because they are all too common. In fact, more than half of long-term care in this nation is delivered through family caregivers. CBO estimates that the value of such care is roughly \$234 *billion* annually. Despite these enormous costs, most Americans have done little or nothing to prepare for their future long-term-care needs according to a recent study from the SCAN Foundation.

Clearly, our current system of providing long-term care is unsustainable for both the government and for families. CBO predicts that expenditures for long-term care are likely to increase from about 1.3 percent of GDP to as much as 3.3 percent by 2050.

But we continue to struggle to find ways to address it. I am not so naïve to believe that we are going to find a solution in just one hearing, but we need to start somewhere and begin the discussion. The panel that we have assembled before us today will give us a wide array of ideas for us to debate as we strive to find a bipartisan solution.

I want to thank our witnesses, and as always, my partner on this committee, Senator Susan Collins, and all the members of the committee here today joining me for an informative discussion about long-term care.