

# U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



**RANKING MEMBER** *Special Committee on Aging*

## **Sen. Casey's Opening Statement Falls Prevention: National, State, and Local Solutions to Better Support Seniors October 16, 2019**

“Thank you, Chairman Collins, for holding this hearing today and for the work done by you and both [of our] staffs on this report. I am pleased that the committee took up the issue of falls prevention this year.

“In order to inform our hearing today and release the Committee’s annual report, entitled “Falls Prevention: National, State and Local Solutions to Better Support Seniors,” the Committee solicited input from stakeholders, experts, academics and federal agencies.

“We received nearly 200 comments from stakeholders about falls prevention and responses from nearly every relevant federal agency. There is good reason for that response. As the report finds, falls are a serious issue that affect a growing number of Americans each year. Let me give you two numbers. 30 and 50. The first is 30,000. In 2016, almost 30,000 older adults died from falls. The next is 50. In 2015, falls cost the U.S. health care system \$50 billion as Senator Collins indicated.

“Those numbers are staggering. And they may not even tell the whole story because many older adults don’t tell anyone when they fall. We must remove the stigma associated with falling so that they can get the help they need to age in place – where they want to be – in their homes and communities.

“As our report illustrates, there are steps that can be taken to make this a reality.

“I’ll start with one. Physical mobility. That is key. Staying active – walking, stretching and strength-training – all of that is proven to reduce risk of falls among older adults.

“Second. Continuing to invest in the development, dissemination and evaluation of proven interventions is critical. It’s why Chairman Collins and I are working to get more resources for evidence-based programming for seniors through our efforts to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

“Number three. Home modifications can also help. Yet, to a senior on a fixed income, even installing a grab bar in the shower may be out of reach due to cost. The research community also has a role to play by ensuring that older adults are part of clinical trials, so that we know the prescription drugs they may need do not come with a dose of falling.

“Providers must be trained to screen patients for their falls risk and refer those in need of intervention to the appropriate service provider. A conversation that allows a provider to assess a patient should be part of every wellness visit.

“I am hopeful that our work over the past year, along with this hearing today and the release of this report, will do the following. Number one, will launch that type of dialogue between patients and providers; number two, propel the research community to do more; number three get more dollars invested into supporting home modifications; and number four, encourage more older adults to be active.

“I am particularly interested in sharing this report with the relevant agencies and learning how the recommendations will be implemented. Not just put in a report. Implemented.

“I want to thank each of our witnesses for being here. And I’d like to reiterate my thanks to Chairman Collins for holding this important hearing and for her leadership in releasing this report.”

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