

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

**Sen. Casey's Opening Statement
From Joint Pain to Pocket Pain: Cost and Competition
Among Rheumatoid Arthritis Therapies
February 7, 2018**

“Thank you, Chairman Collins, for holding this hearing today and we want to thank our witnesses for their presence here and their testimonies.

“More than 54 million Americans are living with arthritis, including 3 million just in the state of Pennsylvania alone. The prevalence of arthritis increases with age. Half of Americans ages 65 and older are diagnosed with arthritis. Women are at a greater risk of arthritis than men. Three times more women than men are living with rheumatoid arthritis, as the Chairman noted. As she also noted, this one of the more severe types of this disease.

“The sheer number of people who may be diagnosed with arthritis gives us good reason to examine this illness and its treatments. We must promote pathways to foster innovation and promote access to life changing medications. Indeed, with the emergence of novel treatments for rheumatoid arthritis over the last two decades people are living longer, fuller lives. But these treatments are not always affordable. One of our witnesses here today, Dr. Harvey, will tell us about the impact this has had on patients.

“Americans living with arthritis—just like any other disease or condition—must be able to access and afford the treatments they need. No baby boomer or senior should go without care simply because the price tag is too high or the out-of-pocket cost is too great. No one should live in fear that one day they won't be able to afford the medicine that allows them to live and work in their community.

“It is for this reason that I was pleased to help close the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap—known as the ‘donut hole’—as part of the Affordable Care Act. Since that time, more 275,000 Pennsylvanians with Medicare have save almost \$1.6 million on their prescription medications because of this change. Now, that's the good news.

“But, as we will hear today, there is much more that can be done to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities can afford life-sustaining and life-saving treatments. These are issues that span research and innovation, regulatory approvals, market forces and coverage. Our witnesses will shed light onto these different factors and more. I look forward to the committee's discussion.”

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