

Statement of Sen. Herb Kohl
“Ensuring Quality and Oversight in Assisted Living”
Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing
November 2, 2011

Good afternoon, and thank you all for coming today. I am very pleased to have Senator Bill Nelson, a longtime member of the Aging Committee, chair this hearing. He is a committed and hard-working member of this panel. The great state of Florida is home to the largest number of seniors in the country and a leader among states in trends that shape long-term care, including assisted living.

We’ve also paid a great deal of attention to long-term care in Wisconsin. In fact, two years ago, we reached a point where the number of people living in assisted living residences exceeded the number living in Wisconsin’s nursing homes. More and more older Americans are looking for options that let them stay within their community and allow them to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.

Recognizing the growing importance of assisted living, the Aging Committee hosted a roundtable in March when Senator Corker and I gathered 19 talented experts to discuss a wide range of topics, including ways to address the need for more affordable assisted living and how to deal with consumers who can no longer afford to pay for their care. This afternoon we are looking to this panel to help us craft solutions in two key areas – quality assurance and oversight.

Assisted living encompasses a large variety of residential options and levels of care that vary from state to state and even within states. Despite the many differences, we need some level of consistency in the quality of service and safety standards that all providers should be expected to meet. We also need to understand how best to enforce these standards, and at what level of government. And we need to provide much more transparency about quality and foster a better dialogue between residents, their families and providers so that tragedies like the one that Mr. Navas will relate are prevented.

We look forward to hearing from all of you, and we thank you again for coming. And with that, I turn the gavel over to my good friend, Senator Nelson, who has been deeply involved in this important issue.