

**Opening Statement of Sen. Chuck Grassley
Forum, "Consumers Assess the Nursing Home Initiative"**

September 23, 1999

Good morning. I am glad to open today's meeting about the nursing home initiative. For more than two years now, the Special Committee on Aging has focused on the quality of care in nursing homes. Early on, the General Accounting Office documented severe problems in too many nursing homes. These problems included bed sores, malnutrition and dehydration. The GAO also exposed a weak enforcement system that let bad nursing homes off the hook. The Health Care Financing Administration responded with an initiative to improve conditions.

Without question, HCFA has done a lot of work in this area. Now it's time for results. Millions of Americans are counting on the success of this initiative. They include the 1.6 million residents of nursing homes, their family members and all of us who care about how our society treats its most vulnerable members. Many eyes are on what's coming from HCFA in Washington, D.C. We need to know whether the word from here is improving the lives of nursing home residents hundreds of miles away.

With that in mind, today we'll hear from a nursing home resident in Georgia, and the family members of nursing home residents in Maryland, Missouri and Pennsylvania. Advocates for nursing home residents from Iowa, Kansas and Virginia will share their experiences. Also with us are leading reformers who are in constant contact with those in the field. All of these individuals will tell us whether anything has changed in their environments. I hope we'll learn that things have changed for the better.

Dr. Bill Scanlon of the General Accounting Office is our moderator today. Senator Breaux and I will turn things over to his capable hands after making our opening remarks.