

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**SENATOR JOHN BREAUX**  
*Long-Term Care: Who Will Care for the Aging Baby Boomers?*  
**June 28, 2001**

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I have called for this hearing-the first in a multi-part series on long-term care-in an effort to provide a forum for examining the potential crisis we face given the changing demographics in this nation. Advances in medical technology ensure that most of us will live into our 70s and 80s. When one pairs that fact with the statistic that there are 77 million baby boomers who are aging, it is apparent that there will be increasing demands on our long-term care system in the next couple of decades.

I am especially grateful to Secretary Thompson for taking the time out of his busy schedule to be here with us today. The Secretary was committed to finding innovative solutions to funding long-term care when he was Governor of Wisconsin and he brings that same commitment to his new capacity. I look forward to hearing about the federal initiatives that I know that the Department of Health and Human Services has commenced in an effort to support states in their long-term care efforts.

I believe today's hearing will provide an opportunity for all of us to gain an improved understanding not only of the current status of long-term care services and how they are financed but also a sense of what the future is likely to behold. We all know that the population aged 85 and older is the group most likely to need assistance with daily living. Whereas in 1998 there were 4 million Americans in that age group, the U.S. Census Bureau expects that number to jump to 7 million by the year 2020-a vivid illustration of the new demands that will be placed on the system in the near future.

I feel that the time is ripe for a call-to-action on the issue of long-term care-and that is the purpose of today's hearing. Policymakers, providers and consumers need to partner to determine the most appropriate avenues for reform. Today's hearing will provide all of us with a better sense of what this nation's long-term care population is facing and I look forward to subsequent national dialogue on this issue so vitally important to America's seniors.