

**Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl  
Special Committee on Aging Hearing  
Aging in Place: The National Broadband Plan and  
Bringing Health Care Technology Home  
April 22, 2010**

Good afternoon. First, I'd like to thank all of today's witnesses for joining us, whether in person or thanks to the wonders of technology. We are fortunate to have Senator Ron Wyden chair today's hearing on the national broadband plan and the impact it may have on telehealth for seniors. Senator Wyden has always been a very active member of the Aging Committee, bringing to the table his experience working with the Gray Panthers in his home state of Oregon. He is known for his passion and leadership on the issue of health care, and we are so pleased to have him hold today's hearing.

As we will hear today, communications and medical technology has the ability to keep more seniors healthier at a lower cost, particularly those who live in remote rural areas. There are a number of health systems and organizations in Wisconsin that are putting telehealth technologies to work, such as ThedaCare, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, Marshfield Clinic, and the Aurora Visiting Nurse Association.

Thanks to funding made available in last year's stimulus bill, the federal government is making efforts to expand our national broadband network so that more doctors and patients can take advantage of these technologies. Through the Judiciary Committee, we are working to ensure that this is done in a way that fosters competition amongst broadband providers.

Unfortunately, despite the spread of broadband, several stumbling blocks stand in the way of widespread adoption of telehealth technologies in the home. Senator Wyden and the witnesses he has invited today will shed light on this timely issue, and hopefully suggest some potential solutions.

I'm sorry that I cannot stay very long, as I have other obligations and prior commitments. But I have full confidence in Senator Wyden, and I thank him once again for his contributions to the Aging Committee. I'll now turn over the gavel.