

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

Chairman Bob Casey's Opening Statement
"Financial Literacy: Addressing the Unique Just-in-Time Decisions Older Americans and
People with Disabilities Face"
January 13, 2022

The Senate Special Committee on Aging will come to order. Before we turn to today's topic, I want to commend the Committee's members and the work of this Committee during the first session of the 117th Congress. This is the tenth hearing I have held as Chair, along with Ranking Member Scott of this Committee, and our first hearing of 2022. Ranking Member Scott, I want to thank you for your continued partnership and the work we've done together. Let me turn to the topic for today. Today's hearing will examine the decisions that millions of older Americans make every year, involving their income, savings, insurance, homes and so many issues. These choices that they make can have lasting consequences for their lives.

Today, the Committee is also releasing a bipartisan report on the help Americans need to make these critical decisions. I'm holding up the report if you can't see it. It's entitled *Financial Literacy in Retirement: Providing Just-in-Time Information and Assistance to Older Americans and People with Disabilities*. That will be available on a lot of platforms and through Senate offices and back in our states. Whoever wants copies of them, we can provide those. It's critically important that we compile reports like this and I want to thank the staff for the good work that they've done to make that possible. We

are also going to disseminate a brochure. The brochure is entitled *Retirement Decisions*. It's about all kinds of information about the difficult decisions that people have to make before and even during their retirement. We know that for example, this year, nearly 11,000 Americans will turn age 65 every single day. 11,000 a day. In my home state of Pennsylvania, that number is about 460 Pennsylvanians who will turn 65 each day.

Just one example, many of the Americans reaching this milestone can benefit from real time information on how to sign up for Medicare for example. One such person is in my home state of Pennsylvania, from Beaver County, Rochester, Pennsylvania, is Charlotte Zgoda, who contacted our offices way back in 2019. Charlotte's husband always took care of their finances, but when he passed away, she was not able to keep his health plan. When she tried to sign up for Medicare, she learned she would have to pay a Part B late enrollment fee, and that fee was for life. Had she and her husband received the support they needed when they approached age 65, Charlotte believes they would have been able to make a more informed decision. So many families face these kinds of challenges. When nearing retirement, Americans face so many important and complex financial decisions. These decisions can be daunting—for anyone, no matter who you are.

People of course want timely information and help from a trusted source of information. They seek assistance in making the right financial decision for themselves and for their families, but they often don't know where to turn. Last year, my constituent services team, received over 1,000 calls and emails from Pennsylvanians on these issues. Thankfully, both Congress and the White House have committed to helping Americans

demystify these financial decisions. In December, President Biden released an executive order intended to enhance the consumer experience and align services to support people at critical moments, like turning 65. And in the last Congress, some provisions of a bill that I worked on with Senator Young, the so called BENES Act. Here's a long name for it, the Medicare Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification Act. We need acronyms when we have that. Portions of that legislation was signed into law. These provisions make sure that fewer people experience a gap in health coverage after enrolling in Medicare. It is also why I'm committed to working with Senator Young to reintroduce additional provisions from the BENES Act.

These policies would ensure Americans receive timely notice about when and how to sign up for Medicare, and fair warning about the penalties that can result from delay. Across kitchen tables all across the country, retirees and seniors are asking "Should I take my Social Security, or should I wait?" Second, "Do I need to sign up for Medicare, or can I wait?" Third, they might be asking, "Is it time to sell my home?" These are not simple decisions for anyone. Our witness panel will shed light on the information Americans need— "just in time"— to succeed. With that, I want to turn to Ranking Member Scott for his opening remarks.