

## **Opening Statement of Chairman Bill Nelson**

March 26, 2014

U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing: *Preventing Medicare Fraud*

Good afternoon, and welcome to this hearing of the Special Committee on Aging. This past Sunday, we marked the four year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act. While there may be pieces of the ACA that we here on Capitol Hill don't agree on, I think we can all be supportive of the important new tools it gave the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to use in the fight against fraud.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, CMS has more authority than ever before to keep bad providers out of the system, and to find fraudulent providers through sophisticated data analysis.

We will hear today about how CMS is using those tools to prevent fraud in the Medicare system, and stopping the theft of billions of dollars every year.

But, despite our best efforts, and despite all of these tools, this country continues to lose as much as \$60 to 90 billion dollars a year to Medicare fraud.

We can't afford to lose this much of taxpayers' hard earned dollars to fraud, and it's clear we can't arrest our way out of a problem of this magnitude. The Inspector General's office will talk about their efforts to fight Medicare fraud in my home state of Florida, where unfortunately too many bad actors have set up to prey on our seniors.

And, while we often think about fraud in terms of dollars and cents, it can have a cost far greater than the financial one. We will hear firsthand from a woman who received unnecessary and potentially dangerous treatments she did not need, just so that her doctor could bill Medicare for them. And we will hear from a Medicare Senior Patrol coordinator, who counsels seniors with similar stories every day.

I am also pleased to have Senator Carper with us today, who has been a leader in the Senate in the fight against Medicare fraud. Senator Carper is a former member of this committee and now chairs the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of his anti-fraud legislation, which will encourage reporting of Medicare fraud and impose tougher penalties on those who would commit fraud.

It is my hope that we come out of this hearing with a new appreciation for the human cost of fraud, and new ideas for ways to work together—to build on the work done by Senator Carper and others—to stop those who would steal money from Medicare and the future generations who will need it.

Our distinguished panel—which represents both the public and private sector, cooperating together— will have some great ideas on this subject. I look forward to hearing them. Thank you for your willingness to share your experiences and ideas with us.