

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

Sen. Casey's Opening Statement **"There's No Place Like Home: Home Health Care in Rural America"** **February 12, 2020**

"Chairman Collins thanks very much I apologize for being late. We had a scheduling change and I am sorry for that delay. I am pleased that the Committee, today, has convened to discuss the important issue of access to health care, particularly home health care, in rural communities.

"From Washington County which is in southwest Pennsylvania where one of our witnesses, Mr. Adams, is from. From that county to Wayne County all the way up in northeast Pennsylvania near where I live, there is about 350 miles of road through rural Pennsylvania.

"We know from research that people who live along that stretch of road—and along rural roads across the country—are more likely to be older, to be sicker and to be less well-off than their peers. And, as a result, they require more, more health care services.

"I have visited with seniors and people with disabilities in at least 33 of 67 counties in the last couple of years. One of the constants I hear is that they prefer to age and receive services and supports in their homes and their communities.

"Due to transportation constraints and travel distances, accessing those services can be challenging—and that is an understatement. That is especially true for seniors and people with disabilities living in rural areas of our state and our country.

"They tell me that they skip medical appointments because there is no affordable or easy way to make the trip. This can lead to even greater disparities and even worse health outcomes.

"In an effort to meet people where they are—and keep them healthier longer—we must make investments to expand access to rural health services at both the macro and micro level.

"We must ensure that individuals and families have affordable health care. It is why I have been fighting to protect the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid from cuts and sabotage by the Administration. We must protect Medicare from the \$0.5 trillion in budget cuts that have been recently proposed by the Administration.

“We must support rural hospitals. That is why I introduced the Rural Hospital Sustainability Act, which provides stable funding for rural hospitals, allowing hospitals to redesign their care and remain open in our rural communities.

“And, we must invest in home health care. That is why I am introducing the Home and Community-Based Services Infrastructure Improvement Act. This bill will provide Medicaid grants to all states to support existing service providers and encourage the creation of new delivery systems to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

“The bill will provide states with funds to support more accessible transportation and housing. It will also incentivize states to increase wages and benefits for direct care workers—people, like Mr. Adams, who is with us today and others who do that difficult work in rural communities.

“In our state of Pennsylvania, more than 13,000 older adults and people with disabilities are waiting, waiting for home and community-based services. Across the country, that number is more than 700,000 people.

“My bill aims to change that—to make home based care and services a reality for all who need it. An investment in home care is an investment in the future of rural America. It is also an investment in our care, our workforce and our economy. Madam Chair, thank you.”

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