

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY

 RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

Sen. Casey's Opening Statement Hearing on Insulin Access and Affordability: The Rising Cost of Treatment May 8, 2018

“Chairman Collins thank you, very much for holding this hearing today. I’m pleased that we were able to invite your co-chair of the Diabetes Caucus, Senator Shaheen, to participate in our hearing. And we are grateful to be examining this subject today.

“An estimated 30.3 million Americans are living with diabetes. Eighty-six million Americans have prediabetes, and that number that have that circumstance don’t even know they have it in many instances

“In my home state of Pennsylvania, 12.8 percent, or 1.4 million people, just in Pennsylvania, and that’s of the adult population that have a diagnosis of diabetes as of 2014.

“We know there are many complications associated with it, including heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and even death.

“In Pennsylvania alone, diabetes and prediabetes cost an estimated \$13.4 billion a year. One state, \$13.4 billion—that includes the cost of physician visits, hospital care and yes, the cost of prescription medication, like insulin.

“Indeed, even with advancements in medication and technology, treatments can often times be out of reach for our loved ones. That is unacceptable. No senior should have to go without lifesaving medication.

“I’m pleased to say that Congress did take steps to make coverage more affordable through the Affordable Care Act—by expanding Medicaid, by closing the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap, known as the ‘donut hole’, and by providing preventive care at no cost. We must continue to protect and strengthen the Affordable Care Act. And, we must keep the promise that Congress made to the American people, that Medicare and Medicaid will be there, always will be there, when they need it.

“But our work is not done. As we hear from our witnesses today, there is not one policy that will address the rising cost of prescription drugs, especially in the context of seniors. The price of insulin has tripled between 2002 and 2013, just 11 years. There is more we can and should be doing to shield patients from sky high costs.

“It is for this reason that I am so pleased that we are having this hearing today – and that Chairman Collins and I had the chance to participate in hearings in the health, education, labor pensions committee. We’ve aired issues and policy recommendations, but now, we must act to address the cost of prescription drugs.

“The President will soon speak on this topic. He has indicated that he, too, recognizes that more needs to be done. The time is now for both bold leadership and bipartisanship. Access to affordable prescriptions, like insulin, is a matter for so many Americans of literally life and death.

“I look forward to our discussion today. Thank you, Chairman Collins.”

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