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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce “Making Health Care Work for America’s Families: Designing a High-Performance Health System” Subcommittee Health March 10, 2009

I’d like to thank Chairman Pallone for holding this series of hearings on health reform.

President Obama has called upon Congress to work with him to enact comprehensive health reform this year.

To underscore his commitment, the President has proposed over \$630 billion in new revenues and program savings to help pay reform.

This marks a sea change from the last eight years. And, as we will hear from our witnesses today, it comes none too soon. The status quo is simply no longer an option.

The health of our people, and the health of our economy, depends on achieving affordable, high quality, sustainable coverage for all Americans.

The President has laid out the broad outlines of his preferred way to achieve this goal. And I think his approach is very sensible:

- It builds on and protects the employer-based coverage that is now in place for most Americans.
- It lets those people who have coverage that works for them keep that coverage.
- It strengthens the safety net of our vital public programs — Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP.
- It gives people a place to go to get accessible, affordable, high-quality coverage through private plans or, if they prefer, through a public alternative. The choice is theirs.

- And it recognizes the critical importance of prevention and wellness services and the management of chronic diseases.

Throughout my career, I've supported a number of different approaches to achieve these ends. I am not wedded to any one of them. Because in the end, the best approach to securing the goals of affordable coverage, sensible controls on cost, and high-quality care has to have one crucial element: it has to be one that we can pass.

I am determined to work to find the approach that will be broadly acceptable to the American people, to the providers that are critical to making it work, and to the members of Congress who, in the end, have to pass it.

This hearing begins the work of this Committee in responding to the President's request. As the testimony will make clear, the healthcare challenges we face are daunting, and finding workable and enactable solutions will be extremely difficult.

I believe this Committee is up to the challenge, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to meet it.