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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “State of Uncertainty: Implementation of PPACA’s Exchanges
and Medicaid Expansion”
Subcommittee on Health
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In March 2010, after decades of trying, Congress passed landmark legislation that extends access to affordable quality health insurance to all Americans. Since then, the law has provided remarkable benefits for American families.

It has allowed over 6 million young adults to stay on their parents’ insurance. It has extended a lifeline in the form of the pre-existing coverage insurance plan to over 90,000 people. It has lowered prescription drug costs for 5.5 million seniors and people with disabilities. It has given 86 million people in the private market and in Medicare access to preventive health benefits at no cost. And it has eliminated lifetime insurance company limits on coverage for 105 million individuals.

That is an outstanding beginning. And now we stand on the brink of full implementation.

Despite the law’s many benefits, it has faced united opposition from the Republican Party since the day it was passed. There have been over 30 votes to repeal the bill. There have been numerous court challenges to the law. And there are states that have steadfastly refused to move forward to assure smooth and effective implementation.

Yet none of these efforts have been successful. The House votes proved to be partisan political posturing. And the Supreme Court declared the law constitutional.

Let’s be clear: the Affordable Care Act is the law of the land. We should all be united in seeing that its implementation works. As we will hear today, HHS and CMS have done their job. They have provided a constant stream of assistance and information to those taking steps to make this law their own.

For some states, no information will ever be enough. And that is the tragedy of politicizing a law that will benefit so many Americans.

But other states are acting responsibly. Two of those states are here today. And there are many others. Just this week, for example, Nevada's Republican Governor announced that Nevada will move forward with the Medicaid expansion. The Republican Governor of Idaho said the state will set up a state based exchange.

I welcome and look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses. I am particularly interested in testimony from Dr. Sharfstein from Maryland and Mr. Allison from Arkansas on what they have been able to accomplish with regard to the ACA expansions. And I would also like to thank Mr. Cohen and Ms. Mann for all the work they have done.

The Affordable Care Act is a solid law that will improve our nation's health and health system for decades to come. Let's move forward and work together to implement it efficiently and effectively.