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BAUCUS HAILS LAUNCH OF NEW PROGRAM SUPPORTING EARLY RETIREE HEALTH PLANS

Finance Chairman Helped Pass Affordable Care Act Creating Early Retiree Reinsurance Program

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today hailed the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) announcement of the first round of employers accepted into a new program that helps employers better afford health insurance coverage for their employees who retire before they are covered under Medicare. Chairman Baucus was a leader in efforts to pass the new health care reform law that created the new program, formally known as the Early Retiree Reinsurance Program. This program will be particularly important to helping Americans access health insurance coverage before health insurance exchanges, which will provide quality, affordable insurance options, are up and running in 2014.

"In these tough economic times, this program will provide much-needed support to help employers in Montana and across the country afford to continue providing health care benefits to retired workers," said Baucus. **"We will continue working with the Administration to quickly implement the many benefits of the new health care reform law which will lower health care costs, provide tax cuts and increase quality, affordable health insurance options for families and small businesses."**

The Early Retiree Reinsurance Program provides \$5 billion in financial assistance to employers to help them maintain health care coverage for early retirees age 55 and older who are not yet eligible for Medicare. Nearly 2,000 employers were accepted into the program as part of the first round of the program and are now eligible to receive reimbursements for medical claims for early retirees and their families. These savings can be used to reduce employer health care costs, provide premium relief to workers, or both. The employers – which include small and large businesses, state and local governments and nonprofits – will begin to receive reimbursements for employee claims this fall. HHS is continuing to accept applications for the program.

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