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Opening Statement

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives and Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs, Stimulus Oversight and Government Spending

Joint Hearing entitled, "Is Government Adequately Protecting Taxpayers from Medicaid Fraud?"

April 25, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank our witnesses who have joined us here today to share their first-hand experience of vulnerabilities in the Medicaid system.

Medicaid is a critical component of the social safety net, providing health care services to an estimated 56 million Americans, the majority of whom are children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. An estimated 16 million additional individuals will benefit from this program beginning in 2014, when the eligibility changes included in the Affordable Care Act take effect.

Medical assistance represents a significant investment by federal and state governments in the health and well-being of the American people. It is only appropriate that we also invest in efforts to reduce improper payments in the program.

We know that every dollar invested in the Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program yields more than \$7 in return to the taxpayer. I am pleased that the Affordable Care Act acknowledges the importance of program integrity efforts with additional resources to fight fraud as well as enhanced oversight of providers and improved data sharing.

Given the size and complexity of the Medicaid program, it is critical to continue investing in the tools necessary to identify patterns of fraud and abuse. Every dollar recouped is essential to providing critical services for those truly in need. Together with our partners in state government and law enforcement, we need to continue to pursue vigorously those whose greed diverts resources from those who need health care services most.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this morning and thank them for contributing to this discussion of accountability in the Medicaid program.

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