



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson***“The Threat to Americans’ Personal Information: A Look into the Security and Reliability of the Health Exchange Data Hub”***

September 11, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee hearing entitled “The Threat to Americans’ Personal Information: A Look into the Security and Reliability of the Health Exchange Data Hub”:

“On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law. I should note that today, the Majority will bring their 41st vote to undermine and repeal the Affordable Care Act to the Floor of the House. The ACA requires the development of a computer-based service that will allow millions of Americans the ability to purchase affordable health care policies for their families, in the most efficient and safest way possible. This undertaking requires the development of a ‘federal data services hub’.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have used the development of these hubs to promote uncertainty and fear about the ability of these computer systems to keep the personal and health information of millions of Americans safe and secure. I appreciate their concern. It seems that last year, a poll conducted by the National Foundation for Credit Counseling found that 64% of Americans fear identity theft. Given the widespread fear of identity theft, the American public should have the facts on whether there is any danger in personal and health information leaking out or being hacked from this system.

This kind of assurance is extremely important if we want millions of people who do not have health care to feel that they can trust this system and use it to get the care they need and the policies they can afford. We all know that sowing fear in a new system is one way to discourage participation and drive down enrollment figures. I am sure no one would want that outcome. So here are the facts that people need to know to have confidence in this system:

- 1) The use of computers to obtain, verify and transmit information in government programs is nothing new;
- 2) The information contained on your driver’s license and Social Security card and any other piece of government-issued identification you have is housed somewhere on a government database;
- 3) The Federal government and the states already use and exchange personal data to determine eligibility for various programs;
- 4) Leaks involving personal data by state and local governments are a rare occurrence. Information leaks involving personal data held by private companies, such as banks, credit card issuers, and retail stores, are common; and
- 5) As of Friday, September 6, 2013, HHS/CMS had taken the necessary steps to obtain a security authorization for this system.

Thus, while I appreciate the Majority’s concern about the government’s ability to safeguard this information, it appears to be misplaced.”

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