

**Testimony of Congresswoman Chellie Pingree**  
**Budget Committee, Members Day**  
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Budget Committee, thank you very much for having me here today. Over the coming weeks you will be leading the reprioritizing of our budget, and finding the right balance between jumpstarting our economy and fiscal responsibility.

I think we all agree that our number one goal is to get our economy back on track and get Americans back to work. Today I want to talk about two things that must be done to achieve that goal: we need to fix our broken health care system and make a real and significant commitment to developing clean energy.

I am pleased to see that the proposed budget reflects a serious commitment to health care reform. I strongly believe that the time has come for guaranteed, affordable access to quality health care for every American. *Health care reform is the single most effective investment that we can make to bring economic relief to workers and families, particularly small business owners, who are struggling in Maine and across the country.*

All too frequently I hear from my constituents who are struggling to provide for their families in the face of soaring health care costs and despite the fear of looming job loss.

Many hard working Mainers have full time jobs but are still uninsured or underinsured. And far too many of them are just one illness or one accident away from bankruptcy. For a long time now, we have known that out of pocket health care costs are a major factor in many bankruptcies.

The challenge of finding quality, affordable health care is particularly daunting to the small businesses that make up the heart of Maine's economy. As a small business owner myself, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to pay the ever increasing health care costs of my employees and for many small business owners, it is the cost of health care that finally makes it impossible to make ends meet.

For this and many more reasons, I am pleased that for the first time in a long time the President's proposed budget represents a serious down payment on health care reform. By starting to provide the Department of Health and Human Services with the necessary funding to achieve its mission, President Obama has demonstrated that he will live up to his promise to work with us to make affordable, quality health care for all Americans a reality.

But this is just the beginning of the long road ahead of us. After years of inattention to this country's health care needs, there is much work to be done to put us on the path to a more efficient, cost-effective system. I look forward to reviewing additional details in the President's proposed budget as they become available, and to working with my colleagues in this Congress to create and support a health care system that we can all be proud of.

I would also like to express my support for serious, significant investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy. By developing new sources of clean energy, we will create sustainable jobs, lessen our dependence on foreign oil and begin to meet the greatest environmental challenge our planet has ever faced. America can and should be a leader in developing the energy technology that will support the world's economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I am particularly proud of the work on developing clean energy that has taken place in Maine. Already we have over 100 megawatts of wind power online, with another 1,000 megawatts in the planning stages and a goal of 3,000 megawatts online by 2020. Meanwhile, the University of Maine, small businesses and others are undertaking groundbreaking research on wind blade efficiency and composite technology. And our wind and tidal power resources are among the best in the country. Maine's offshore wind resource is estimated to be over 100 gigawatts, or 10% of the total US electric production.

But without significant investments, we won't be able to realize the full potential to develop clean energy in Maine or around the country. Investing in the research and infrastructure hastens the development of renewable energy. Without significant investment, we will miss the opportunity to develop good-paying, sustainable jobs and the new sources of energy that will power our economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Finally, while it is important to invest in health care and clean energy, we must do so wisely and carefully. While investing in the future we must also commit ourselves to reducing the deficit, eliminating wasteful spending and finding ways to do more with less. To this end, and as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am pleased that President Obama is practicing "truth in budgeting," particularly when it comes to the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and increasing transparency in our budget process. If we are to build a budget that reflects our priorities, it's essential to put all of the true costs on the table to begin with, and I am looking forward to taking a close look at the budget and vigilantly seeking out any wasteful spending where we can achieve savings and make changes that reflect our shared priorities.

Mr. Chairman, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify in front of this committee and sincerely hope that the committee keeps these thoughts in mind throughout the budget process. I am looking forward to working with this committee throughout the budget process. Thank you.