

PREPARED REMARKS OF SENATOR JOHN HEINZ (R.PA)
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING PROGRAM FOR THE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ADULT DAYCARE
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I am indeed honored to be here this morning with my colleague Senator Bradley and the excellent members of the National Institute for Adult Day Care. Mary Ann, thank you for your kind words.

The key word in adult day health care is independence. Continued independence for millions of frail or disabled Americans stalked by the specter of institutionalization. Independence for the family caregiver for whom time for a hair appointment or a trip to the library equals the riches of Midas.

Let me share one of my own experiences with adult day care from a model Pennsylvania program I visited last summer. I met an independent lady of 76 years of age, who I'll call Mrs. B, who had lived in her own home all her adult life and was proud of it. But Mrs. B began to forget to eat and keep her home clean and safe. She seemed resigned to entering a nursing home, until her daughter persuaded her to try a few days at a local day care center. Mrs. B soon began to enjoy the welcome she received, the companionship, and the sense of purpose the center's activities provided. She became more aware, "more alive," says the staff -- and has continued to live independently for four full years.

Mrs. B's transformation illustrates the benefits reaped from community based long term care services. Nationwide access to such services has been delayed too long.

Today, we are poised at the crest of the wave of long term care opportunities. For more than a decade, we've seen the political momentum build to sweep away an antiquated acute care-only delivery system for a broader package which enables the aged to stay at home, with their families, where they want to be.

A graying America speaks to the national urgency for benefits reform. We need to provide Medicare beneficiaries with guaranteed access to a full continuum of home and community based long term care services. Recent surveys confirm that the 1.5 severely impaired elderly living in the community and their families want services to help them cope at home.

The bill Senator Bradley and I have introduced begins the process by creating a benefit for adult day care. But it is only the beginning of what must be a full throttle run for our larger goal. I was fortunate to serve on the Pepper Commission. Despite some reservations with the official "final" report, I am greatly encouraged that we were able to move the debate over long term care as far as we did, as fast as we did. We agree on the need for a program that empowers Americans with choices, not impoverishes them with costs. You can rest assured that this commissioner, for one, won't let the ball drop when the ink dries!

Thank you again for the honor of being with you this morning.