

**Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“Renewing Communities and Providing Opportunities Through Innovative Solutions to
Poverty”**

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing today to consider ways to improve our federal, state and local efforts to address economic insecurity and instability and to lower the rate of poverty in our country. I also want to thank our witnesses, who have dedicated their lives to establishing and implementing programs to lift individuals, families and children out of poverty.

We have a moral obligation to help the most vulnerable among us and to ensure all Americans have the opportunity to succeed economically. Federal and state programs and initiatives such as Medicaid, the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and federal housing assistance have given millions of Americans the ability to access basic health care, put healthy food on their tables, afford stable homes and find good jobs. Without these fundamental safety net programs, economists and public policy experts have found that 40 to 50 percent more Americans would be living in poverty.

As Speaker Ryan recently noted, there is clearly an important role for the federal government to play in reducing poverty. Yet despite the effectiveness of these programs and others, more than 45 million Americans continue to live in economic hardship. More than six percent of Americans, including over seven million children, live in deep poverty. They're getting by with a household income of less than half the federal poverty level, which is \$12,000 for a family of four. And more than 1.5 million families live on \$2 or less a day.

This is a problem facing families in all of our states. As we say in the Navy, we need all hands on deck to address the growing rates of deep and severe poverty across our country. In addition to state and federal programs, community-based organizations can also play important roles in providing additional support to those in need. These organizations are often well-positioned to see and respond to the needs in their communities and to provide additional assistance that helps to reinforce assistance from government programs.

However, programs such as Medicaid, SNAP and the earned income tax credit that can quickly lift up those who suffer during an economic downturn, are irreplaceable, fundamental lifelines for those Americans living with severe economic hardship. These federal, state and local efforts are important parts of the solution. We also need to find better ways to provide job training and access to education, and to ensure people are paid living wages and that good jobs are available.

I want to close by thanking the witnesses again for their dedication and work to lower the rates of poverty in your communities and across our country. I look forward to hearing your recommendations on what we can do to improve the programs created to help our most vulnerable individuals, families and children.