

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Finance Committee Executive Session to Consider the Nomination of Mehmet Oz to be  
Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services**

**March 14, 2025**

**Senator Cantwell Q&A**

**[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)**

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you. Thank you, Senator Bennet. Thank you Dr. Oz, thank you so much for the visit in our office.

And I wanted to put up, we're not into an "I got you" as much as a long-term commitment, apparently, that you had, from 2009 I think, that every American should have coverage. And that was probably on a visit to Seattle, so we appreciate that.

In continuing the line of questioning that my colleague just had, do you believe in the Medicaid expansion that was done under the Affordable Care Act?

**Dr. Mehmet Oz:** For some states, it made sense. For some it didn't. I think that's a good example of how states should pick a path to take care of their most vulnerable. But they have to have a plan.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, wait, but the states that didn't don't have a plan. What plan did they have?

**Dr. Oz:** As we discussed in your office, with the Affordable Care Act, they have an opportunity to expand Medicaid, or they could use other tactics. As you know, 10 states haven't expanded-

**Sen. Cantwell:** I know, but you're saying that's okay?

**Dr. Oz:** As long as they have a plan to address their challenges of dealing with the underserved populations.

**Sen. Cantwell:** What plan? There are these multiples - look, I don't have the numbers right in front of me, but I'll get those. I guarantee you, they have lots of people unserved.

And as my colleague just said that oftentimes exacerbates the cost on to hospitals in more expensive care instead of getting coverage. You and I talked about this concept of bundling up the working population at 150% above the Medicaid rate, as New York has done, as Minnesota has done, as now other states are trying to do, and creating that incentive juxtaposed to the exchange/ Do you believe in that concept?

**Dr. Oz:** We discussed in Washington state, how you had a very innovative program before the Affordable Care Act, that actually seemed to make sense to me as you described it. I've not studied it in detail, but I like the idea that there are multiple different approaches to moving people from Medicaid, if they're able to get off Medicaid, into the workforce. And to do that, you

have to support them in order to afford insurance. So some transition process if you're able to get off Medicaid, to get you into a private insurance company, prevents the gaps in care that often do result in extraordinary, expensive admissions.

**Sen. Cantwell:** I'm saying something else that I hope my Republican colleagues will listen to. I'm asking you if you believe in a virtual bundle, delivered by the private sector, getting access to that as a way to reduce the exorbitant payments on the Silver Plans. That's what I'm asking.

**Dr. Oz:** It's a detailed question that I do have to research a bit, and if confirmed, I look forward to following up with you on that. Because I think in your office, some of the ideas we discussed, including that one, are promising ways that would allow people the flexibility to choose what type of insurance they want, if they're starting to work and it financially doesn't make sense to get off Medicaid yet.

And if they are able to get above the poverty level, which is, you know, is \$16,000 a year for a single individual, it's not much money. You have to have ways for people making slightly more than that to feel confident that they're protected.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, I think the American people want to know, just from your nomination and from this process that we're going to go through, what is it that Republicans believe. If they're saying next year, which I think the President is saying, we're going to cut off all of those Silver Plan subsidies, I'm saying, I least want to hear from you whether you believe that bundling those people up into a virtual bundle, I think is what you called it in my office, and allowing them to have that market power is an idea that you agree with.

**Dr. Oz:** Senator Cantwell, I look forward, if confirmed, with this Committee to researching that in detail. It's a promising enough idea that if you'll take me into your office again, I would love to visit you with it.

**Sen. Cantwell:** Okay, well, definitely my vote will be predicated on this. So I can't wait 'till after you're confirmed, I need you to think about this.

Because, look, you're coming with the ability to be an advocate here. So we want to know what you're going to be an advocate for. And all my colleagues are going to want to know, are you going to cut Medicaid? We want to know that from everybody. We want to know, are you going to cut Medicaid? We don't believe in cutting Medicaid.

It's 1.8 million people now in the state of Washington. It is, basically the number of people in my state who are getting maternal care from this is exorbitant. The number of kids getting care from this is high. 47% of kids in my state receive insurance from Medicaid. And we have population centers of our entire state that are well above 50% Medicaid, Medicare populations.

So how do you deliver health care to Central Washington when it's that level? So we want to know whether you're going to commit to concepts. If you don't like some aspects of

The Affordable Care Act, you should say which ones you don't like.

Thank you very much, but I hope that you will learn that the Affordable Care expansion of Medicaid work, and virtual bundles that give consumers more clout also work.

Thank you.