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ANH-USA Supports Supplement Quality Standards

Questions Senate Committee's Intentions and Priorities

Washington, DC: During yesterday's Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing "Dietary Supplements: What Seniors Need To Know," Chairman Herb Kohl (D-WI) stated inaccurately that the safety and efficacy of dietary supplements are doubtful because these products are not subject to approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). According to the Alliance for Natural Health USA (ANH-USA), Chairman Kohl is badly misinformed about a number of issues related to dietary supplements.

"Although Senator Kohl's opening statement made an attempt to be balanced (he assured the room that no one is suggesting consumers shouldn't be able to purchase dietary supplements), throughout the rest of the hearing the Chair seemed to lack an understanding of current supplement guidelines and the already vast amount of authority the FDA has to provide regulatory oversight," said Gretchen DuBeau, executive and legal director for ANH-USA.

Supplements are currently subject to a wide variety of regulations. They are the most regulated food on the market.

- Adverse events (other than minor ones) must be reported to the FDA, and all adverse events must be kept on file by supplement companies for six years;
- Supplement companies must comply with current Good Manufacturing Practices, which require companies to evaluate the identity, purity, quality, strength, and composition of dietary supplement ingredients, among hundreds of additional safeguards;
- The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) tightly controls all claims made by a product to prevent false and misleading information and health claims not approved by the FDA; and
- The FDA can ban any product that threatens public health.

The hearing focused on a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation into deceptive supplement marketing practices. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), an original proponent of DSHEA, clarified through his questioning of the witnesses that the deceptive practices were illegal, and the FDA currently has the authority to criminally prosecute all companies that engage in these illegal practices. Senator Hatch further pointed to his "Dietary Supplement Full Implementation and Enforcement Act of 2010", introduced by Senators Hatch and Tom Harkin (D-IA) on May 25. The bill would encourage the FDA to exercise its enforcement authority and provide funding for them to do so.

"We support efforts by Congress and the FDA to remove the few bad actors in the industry," said Gretchen DuBeau. "But it's important to remember that the vast majority of dietary supplements are safe. Half of all Americans depend on them," added DuBeau.

In 2009, the FDA received reports of more than 373,000 serious adverse-events and nearly 64,000 deaths associated with pharmaceutical drugs. In contrast, the FDA received only 1275 serious adverse event reports and not a single reported death from the use of vitamins, minerals, amino acids or herbs by the Poison Control Center.

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About the Alliance for Natural Health USA (ANH-USA): www.anh-usa.org The Alliance for Natural Health USA is part of an international organization dedicated to promoting natural, sustainable healthcare through good science and good law. We protect the right of natural health practitioners to practice, and the right of consumers to choose the healthcare options and treatment modalities they prefer, including complementary and alternative medicine. As a membership-based organization, we unite consumers, practitioners, and industry to speak with a common voice and have worked since 1992 to shift the medical paradigm from an exclusive focus on surgery, drugs and other conventional techniques to an "integrative" approach incorporating food, dietary supplements and lifestyle changes.