

House Committee Votes on Policies to Improve Health Care Affordability and Availability for Millions of Americans

Bill Creates Coverage Option in Non-Medicaid Expansion States, Makes Permanent Increased Tax Credits for Marketplace Coverage, and Caps Medicare Enrollees' Drug Costs

Washington, D.C.—September 13, 2021—The House Energy and Commerce Committee will vote today on legislation that would greatly improve the availability and affordability of health care for millions of Americans. The legislation—part of the broader budget reconciliation package before Congress—would create a means for low-income people living in states that have not expanded Medicaid to access affordable health care; make permanent increased subsidies now available to help people afford comprehensive health coverage on the exchange; and would cap out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare enrollees, among other provisions.

A statement from Lisa Lacasse, president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) follows:

“We welcome the committee’s action on these critical policies to help millions of people access and afford comprehensive health care coverage. Research has repeatedly shown that access to good health coverage is critical to saving lives from cancer, yet far too many people are still unable to get or pay for the health coverage they need, especially those with limited incomes.

“By working to close the coverage gap in states that have refused to expand Medicaid, more than two million of the country’s most economically vulnerable Americans will be able to finally get health care coverage; including access to essential cancer screenings to catch the disease early, when it’s most treatable. ACS CAN has been working diligently to extend benefits to those who need coverage in non-expansion states. This is a great start, and we are eager to find ways to ensure everyone who needs coverage gets covered.

“Making the increased subsidies for middle income Americans to purchase coverage on the exchange permanent will also help ensure continued progress in our efforts against cancer. Already more than 2.5 million Americans have seen significant reductions in their monthly premiums, including many whose premiums were reduced to zero. This is especially important when you consider the cost of cancer treatment and care and the financial burden patients often shoulder while also trying to manage their disease or its long-term effects. Making marketplace health plans more affordable through increased subsidies is a great step toward ensuring more people can get and keep the coverage they need to stay healthy and to treat their illness should they get sick.

“Similarly, for those enrolled in Medicare who currently face unlimited cost sharing for their prescription drugs, the financial burden can be overwhelming. Establishing an annual cap for outpatient prescription drug costs and enabling enrollees on high-cost prescriptions to space out co-pays rather than pay them all upfront, would allow patients to plan for their expenses and provide some financial relief for a population often on fixed incomes.

“By providing more ways for people to obtain and afford comprehensive health care coverage, Congress can significantly improve our nation’s health outcomes for years to come. We urge the House to move quickly to advance these measures and look forward to working with the Senate to ensure the best provisions for cancer patients make it into law.”

#

About ACS CAN at 20

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) makes cancer a top priority for policymakers at every level of government. ACS CAN empowers volunteers across the country to make their voices heard to influence evidence-based public policy change that saves lives. We believe everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to prevent, find, treat, and survive cancer. Since 2001, as the American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN has successfully advocated for billions of dollars in cancer research funding, expanded access to quality affordable health care, and made workplaces, including restaurants and bars, smoke-free. As we mark our 20th anniversary, we’re more determined than ever to stand together with our volunteers and save more lives from cancer. Join the fight by visiting www.fightcancer.org.