

Opening Statement of Representative Anna G. Eshoo for the Record

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

*Markup of H.R. 829, the Prioritizing the Most Vulnerable Over Lottery Winners Act of 2017 and
H.R. 181, the Close Annuity Loopholes in Medicaid (CALM) Act*

2123 Rayburn House Office Building

February 7, 2017

Mr. Chairman, today the subcommittee will consider two bills that my colleagues across the aisle claim will close ‘loopholes’ in the Medicaid system.

According to the Majority, millionaires and billionaires and those who can afford to purchase private health insurance are taking advantage of these ‘loopholes’ and enrolling in Medicaid. The Majority is using these claims to justify changing Medicaid’s eligibility requirements.

Simply stated, when eligibility requirements narrow, Medicaid beneficiaries who previously qualified for coverage will no longer qualify and will lose their Medicaid coverage. The goal of this Committee and the Congress should not be to take coverage away from those for whom Medicaid is their only option.

Medicaid is the safety net of our nation and serves as a lifeline for 74 million Americans. It provides vital health care for those that would not receive care anywhere else if the program did not exist. Today, Medicaid has grown beyond its initial mission to meet the needs of the millions of Americans who don’t have access to health insurance through their employers or who can’t afford it on their own.

Medicaid is already an adaptable, efficient and lean program that meets the needs of millions of children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income adults. Millionaires and billionaires are not lining up ahead of these eligible Americans to take their Medicaid coverage.

Real lives are affected by the decisions we make and when we change Medicaid eligibility requirements, real Americans lose their access to health care.

I support the appropriate reform of a system as large as Medicaid. But these proposals are not reform, they are subtraction. The legislation we are considering today does not close loopholes that are being misused and abused. They change eligibility requirements that result in loss of coverage.

I do not support picking around the edges of Medicaid under the guise of reforms to close loopholes, when my colleagues across the aisle have repeatedly demonstrated that they do not support Medicaid.