

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

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Remarks: House Ways and Means Hearing on Surprise Billing

OPENING

Chairman Doggett and Ranking Member Nunes, thank you for holding this important hearing on protecting patients from surprise medical billing.

I'm grateful for your leadership to examine this problem so that Congress can work toward a bipartisan solution.

SURPRISE BILLING

Today, I would like to share the story of a woman from Washington state who had a massive heart attack.

For urgent cardiac care, she was taken to an out-of-network hospital in Oregon.

To save her life, she had heart-bypass surgery, and a valve replacement and repair.

She spent a whole month in the hospital recovering from surgery and a raging infection that required powerful antibiotics.

She was discharged...

... and when she received her bill, she owed nearly \$227,000.

This is more than just a "surprise bill." It's **Massive. Stressful. And Devastating.**

Now, she eventually was able to get help and relief with a complicated medical charity-care waiver.

But it took six months of uncertainty and countless phone calls from collection agencies.

It shouldn't be this way--- especially when someone is recovering from a heart attack.

What makes this story even more painful is that **nobody** told her she could have been transferred to an in-network hospital...

.... which could have saved tens of thousands of dollars.

As this patient said herself:

“There should be fairness and equality in the system. You shouldn't have to file a complaint.

“This should be ingrained into the system so that when you have a problem and you're due relief, you get it.”

She's right.

THE SOLUTION

So, what's the solution?--- There must be more transparency.

Right now, it's too difficult to be an informed patient.

If your care is out-of-network and you will be charged for it, you should know.

TRUMP

I'm grateful that President Trump is making this a priority to end surprise billing...

... and I agree, that Congress should lead on a bipartisan solution.

We can end surprise billing and give families the certainty they need over their health care.

Again, there shouldn't be any surprises.

People should be able to trust they know how much they are going to be billed-- especially in the most stressful situations of their lives.

Thank you, Chairman Doggett and Ranking Member Nunes...

... and all the members of Ways and Means.

I look forward to working with you and my colleagues on Energy and Commerce.