

March 23, 2021

Hearing on: "Building on the ACA: Legislation to Expand Health Coverage and Lower Costs"

Chair Eshoo, thank you for holding this hearing. It is another day in the Energy Commerce Committee where the Democrats continue to only bring up partisan bills. All while, we have a border crisis on our hands and are still in a global pandemic.

Obamacare:

The ACA increased premiums dramatically and many insurers stopped offering coverage. Before the ACA, __; in 2015, _____. Since the last time we met on these bills in 2019; however, actions by states and the Trump administration have led to insurers come back into markets and a stabilizing or even lowering of premiums. However, it is still too expensive and not working for patients and families across the country.

This is evident by the need for my colleagues across the aisle to increase subsidies in the \$1.9 Trillion spending package. Besides the fact that Democrats continue to push the cost of ever rising health care costs on taxpayers, rather than address the cost of health care, these tax credits were not targeted.

For example, a family with an income of XXX will get XX.

Bill break down:

Even the generous subsidies are not enough to make these plans attractive, apparently, as we are back again to discuss more spending and fixes. The 18 bills we are discussing today double down on this partisan approach to spend more money to subsidize ever increasing health care costs. By my count, on top of the \$1.9 trillion Democrats just spent, today we are discussing at least another \$45 billion or so based on scores I could find from last Congress. And that doesn't even include all 18 bills. Compared to \$1.9 trillion, \$45 billion may sound small, but that is almost the entire annual budget of the National Institutes of Health.

I don't have time to go through all the bills, but of the 6 that were actually part of two 2019 hearings in Energy and Commerce, the text is almost identical. The bill giving grants for state exchanges, for example, doesn't even update the date from Jan. 1, 2019 to next year – so states like New Jersey that have already established an exchange since our last hearing could get funding from this grant.

States have continued to innovate in the last two years to try to do what they can with the limited flexibility they have under the Affordable Care Act to find alternative options for their citizens. I am glad Mr. Cameron is here today to tell us how he's worked to stabilize the Idaho insurance market, and make sure this

committee is aware of how these bills will upset his good progress and end up with fewer people in Idaho having insurance.

The 10 Medicaid bills are new, and we were not consulted at all. I specifically want to mention Money Follows the Person (MFP). This program is valuable for many individuals and I am a champion of this program. Congress just extended MFP in December, making important changes to the program. It is premature in my opinion to consider a permanent MFP extension before we know the impact of those changes. Especially when there are so many other items worthy of this committee's attention, such as:

- Crisis at the border, where the HHS office in charge of taking care of unaccompanied children are overwhelmed. Just this weekend another facility had to be opened, as some reports indicate there are over 15,000 children in their control while over 13,000 licensed beds for them.
- The impact of COVID-19 on mental health and substance use disorders, including if the programs this committee worked to pass in CARA and 21st Century Cures, passed in 2016, and the SUPPORT Act in 2018, have been responding to the surge in demand.
- Increase in health care costs. This hearing title discusses "lowering costs," but I'm not sure the bills today do so, or just continue subsidizing expensive

insurance. I am glad Ms. Carey is here to discuss some of the drivers of health care costs and what we can do about it.

Medicare for All:

I also want to note that while the Democrats have called this hearing to look at 18 bills and talk about building on the ACA, over 100 Democrats, including Chairman Pallone and 15 other members of Energy and Commerce, introduced legislation that would ban ACA plans and Medicaid coverage, and replace it with one size fits all, government run health care for everyone.

Let us not forget, what we were all told about the ACA - if you like your plan you can keep it.

Well today we have bills before us that would do just the opposite by limiting and stopping short term duration plans, but that would be nothing compared to the ___of Americans that would lose their health insurance under Medicare for All.

Conclusion

I hope that Democrats will learn about some of the unintended consequences of the partisan legislation before us today and change course to work with us to lower

health care costs while trusting Americans to make the right choice for themselves on what health insurance is right for them and what doctor to see.