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Senate Health Care Plan Will Dramatically Increase Coverage for Ohioans

Fate of Health Care Reform and the Health of Ohioans in the Hands of the Senate

Columbus, OH—Just days before an historic vote by the Senate on health care reform, Families USA released its report, *At a Crossroads: Is Health Coverage Ahead for America?*, estimating that 886,000 Ohioans will gain coverage as a result of the Senate health care plan. However, if the Senate fails to act, an additional 229,000 Ohioans will become uninsured.

The report, using Congressional Budget Office numbers, puts Ohio in the top 10 states to have the largest gains in coverage by 2019. Conversely, if the opportunity to reform health care is passed by, Ohio will be one of 10 states with the largest losses in coverage.

“It is clear that Ohioans stand to benefit dramatically if the Senate acts on its health care reform plan,” said Col Owens, co-chair of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. “While the pundits are politicizing the issue, we cannot lose sight that health care reform will significantly improve the health of our country by expanding coverage to 31 million Americans and ending insurance company abuses.”

Families USA reports that uninsured Americans are more likely than those with insurance to go without needed medical care. The uninsured are more likely to be diagnosed with a disease in an advanced stage and are more likely to live sicker and die earlier than those with coverage.

The Senate Health Care Reform Bill expands coverage to millions of Americans by:

- Ensuring access for all but requiring insurers to offer coverage to every person who applies, regardless of health status, age, or gender. In addition, insurers will no longer be able to discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions.
- Making premiums affordable by creating an “exchange,” or marketplace, where people will be able to purchase quality coverage with subsidies available to families with incomes up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Strengthening Medicaid by making all individuals with incomes below 133 percent of poverty eligible for Medicaid.

According to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office, the Senate bill would ultimately shave \$130 billion off the federal deficit. The Senate bill will extend coverage, bolster the economy, increase the stability and security of coverage, and help to control the rapid rise of health insurance premiums.

“While the Senate proposal is not perfect, it represents a significant step forward in improving access and affordability,” said Cathy Levine, co-chair of Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. “For Ohioans who cannot afford coverage or are denied coverage because of pre-existing conditions the proposal is life-changing. We cannot let politics and the influence of special interests delay this progress because the status quo is simply unacceptable.”

Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage is a nonpartisan coalition uniting the diverse consumer voice with the goal of achieving affordable, high quality care for all. Our membership includes AARP, AFSCME Council 8 AFL-CIO, American Cancer Society, Cerebral Palsy Association of Ohio, Faith Community Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, National Alliance for Mental Illness (Ohio), National Multiple Sclerosis Society Ohio Chapters, Ohio ACORN, Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans, Ohio Council of Churches, Progress Ohio, Service Employees International Union, Toledo Area Jobs with Justice, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1059, UHCAN Ohio, We Are The Uninsured, and We Believe Ohio.

Families USA is the national organization for health care consumers. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advocates for high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans. To get a copy of the full report go to www.familiesusa.org.

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