

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
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Opening Statement of Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Markup on H.R. 1683 – Repeal of the Maintenance of Efforts in Medicaid and CHIP
Subcommittee on Health
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If this bill were to become law, it would slash the number of people that could look to Medicaid and CHIP for their safety net.

For 45 years, the Medicaid program has worked as a lifeline to millions of people, providing healthcare to the lowest income and medically needy Americans. Over the past three years, Medicaid and the CHIP program for children served as the healthcare safety net at a time when we've suffered from the deepest recession since the Great Depression.

Since 2008, Medicaid has enrolled 7 million people as they lost employer sponsored coverage or lost the ability to continue paying their health insurance premiums. During this period, the number of uninsured children actually decreased from 2007 to 2009. This is a testament to the success of these programs.

Republicans are now using arguments like “flexibility” and “freedom” to make us believe that cutting people from access to prescription drugs, a primary care doctor, and nursing home and other long term care is the right thing to do.

This is precisely the wrong way to go.

States are without a doubt facing tight budgets. But cutting eligibility to healthcare is not the answer. In the Medicaid program, the most expensive five percent of enrollees account for more than half of Medicaid spending. And dual eligibles, those eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, account for 9 million people and 40% of total Medicaid spending. States could see a much greater return by managing the care of these high users than by cutting them off the program or cutting their eligibility to services.

H.R. 1683 undermines the stability of the Medicaid and CHIP programs and the commitment states have made to their residents for healthcare coverage. It allows states to cut coverage before the health insurance exchanges make health insurance accessible and affordable for all – at a time when the individual market is still not accessible to sick and low income Americans.

This bill affects some of our country's most vulnerable populations:

1. Kids – This bill would jeopardize the health of 14 million children who are currently receiving coverage under Medicaid and CHIP. Uninsured children are more likely to miss school and to lack immunizations, prescription medications, asthma care, and basic dental care.
2. Pregnant Women – Healthcare is essential to a healthy pregnancy. Rollbacks of coverage mean less prenatal care, more high risk pregnancies, potentially a higher infant mortality rate, and less coverage of deliveries. Rollbacks are particularly dangerous for this group because it is unlikely that a pregnant woman will be offered insurance in today's individual market; the pregnancy would be seen as a pre-existing condition.

Some of the Medicaid provisions that cover children and especially pregnant women were adopted on a bipartisan basis, and cosponsored by myself and Representative Henry Hyde, who was a strong pro-life member of Congress and believed that if you are pro-life, you have to help a woman be able to have a healthy pregnancy and also to have healthy child.

3. Seniors and individuals with disabilities – Unlike other categories, seniors and individuals with disabilities have needs that are not easily met with traditional insurance. For example, long term care services like nursing home care or care that allows a person to live independently in their homes.

These are just some of the populations affected. They exemplify how Medicaid and CHIP have been designed to meet the needs of tens of millions of Americans.

This bill is one step in the Republican plan to undermine and defund Medicaid and CHIP. Their overall goal is to rollback the expansion in the Affordable Care Act, to cap the level of federal funding available to states through a block grant, and to cut the program in half over the next decade by slashing it by nearly \$800 billion.

This legislation undermines access to healthcare for individuals, will result in increased uncompensated care for providers, and will hinder economic growth by pulling money out of states' economies.

It is a dangerous bill and I urge members to vote against it.