

Murphy Helps Broker Compromise that Allows Health Care Reform Effort to Pass House Energy and Commerce Committee

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - After months of debate over sweeping health care reform legislation, this evening Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) helped the House Energy and Commerce Committee pass America's Affordable Health Choices Act, which addresses the spiraling health care costs that have been crippling Connecticut families and businesses for too long. In the last few days, Murphy helped craft changes to the bill to reign in cost, ending a stalemate that delayed passage of the bill in the Energy and Commerce Committee on which he serves.

"The cost of doing nothing about our health care system is too great to ignore. The bill we passed today increases people's choice in insurance coverage, while lowering costs for everyone and helping small businesses - giving people in Connecticut what they need to afford life-saving health insurance," said Murphy.

America's Affordable Health Choices Act will make changes to our current health care system so that more people can afford health insurance and increase choice through a health insurance exchange with a public health insurance option. This exchange would force private plans to compete with each other and a government sponsored plan.

The bill also makes health insurance more affordable by providing tax credits to individuals and businesses to purchase it. While many people in Connecticut have health insurance that they like, premiums are going up and up. Just a few weeks ago, Connecticut's biggest insurer announced that it was increasing rates for individuals by over 30%. And a recent report found that 48,000 state residents, or 310 a week, will lose their health insurance before the end of next year because of increasing costs or other circumstances.

And the bill reforms insurance law to stop discrimination based on pre-existing conditions, limits how much people pay in co-pays and deductibles and guarantees a minimum benefits package.

The compromise Murphy helped work out among Energy and Commerce Committee Members aims to achieve savings

to offset the need to decrease the affordability subsidies in the bill that will help middle class people afford health insurance.

Specifically, the compromise cuts \$100 billion from the bill, primarily by:

- Providing for prior approval for excessive premium increases by companies in the exchange;

- Creating a cost-saving drug formulary for the public option;

- Finding savings through electronic payments of insurance claims.

"We have to squeeze every possible dollar out of this bill, but not at the expense of the people we are trying to help. This compromise gets cost savings from the right place," said Murphy.

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