

Murphy Introduces Amendment to Health Care Bill to Include Members of Congress on Federal Health Care in the Health Care Reform Bill's Exchange

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WASHINGTON, DC - After hosting public events in Waterbury, Danbury, Meriden, Simsbury, Avon and Washington, Connecticut over the last few months and meeting with and hearing from constituents throughout the year on health care, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) filed an amendment to the House health care reform bill that came straight from his constituents. Murphy's amendment, which was submitted to the House Rules Committee this morning, would require Members of Congress who take federal health care to purchase their insurance in the newly created health insurance exchange, which would force private plans to compete with each other and a government sponsored plan.

"This health insurance exchange is designed to be a fair marketplace with lots of options, including a public option, for consumers to choose from, and I think it's going to be a good deal for people in Connecticut. Now, some of the people I've heard from in Connecticut don't think that Members of Congress who take federal health insurance should be treated any differently than people who end up going into the exchange for coverage. So in order to show people that even those of us in Congress have a skin the game, we need to include Members who purchase federal health care coverage in the exchange," said Murphy.

Murphy has been pushing for this idea to be incorporated in the bill since he heard about it from his constituents beginning in August. As the bill was being put together in mid-October, Murphy wrote a letter to House leadership asking them to make this change to the updated bill. Now that the bill is expected to come up for a vote in the coming days, Murphy put in his amendment to be considered by the Rules Committee, which decides which amendments are allowed for a vote on the House floor. The Rules Committee is expected to determine what amendments can be considered on the floor in the next few days.

Overall, the House health care bill makes health insurance more affordable and accessible to all Connecticut residents - those who currently have insurance and those who don't. Affordable health insurance is slipping from the grasps of too many Connecticut residents. This summer, Connecticut's biggest insurer announced that it was increasing rates for individuals by over 30%. And a recent report by Families USA found that of 28,100 Connecticut residents will lose their health coverage in 2009 as a result of losing their jobs. By the end of the year, Connecticut will be home to uninsured adults 303,000, up from 275,600 in 2008.

The bill also:

- reforms insurance law to stop discrimination based on pre-existing conditions;
- ends the practice of patients losing their insurance if they get too sick;
- strengthens Medicare by beginning to close the prescription drug donut hole immediately, cutting co-payments for preventive services, and slashing waste, fraud and abuse in the Medicare system; and
- reduces the deficit while covering 96% of Americans.

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