

For Immediate Release

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Report Shows West Virginia Would Be Among Hardest Hit States Under Senate Health Bill

(Charleston, WV) – Senate Republicans are considering a health care bill that would hit West Virginia harder than almost any other state, according to a new report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Under the Senate Republican bill, 218,000 West Virginians would lose coverage in 2022 compared to current law - dramatically increasing the uninsured rate for the state's non-elderly population by more than 300 percent, the largest increase in any state. That means that one in-every-seven non-elderly West Virginians who would otherwise have coverage would lose it under the bill, the report - which draws on Urban Institute data - shows.

"The Senate GOP health bill would be a disaster for West Virginia and is fatally flawed," said Ted Boettner, Executive Director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. "No amount of tweaks can fix the fundamental problems that make this bill so harmful to the people of our state: failing to ensure access to affordable coverage, failing to combat the opioid crisis, cutting Medicaid deeply and ending our expansion, and harming rural health care providers."

In addition to the large coverage losses, tens of thousands more West Virginians would face worse or less affordable health coverage. And, even West Virginians with job-based coverage could be hurt.

The Senate Bill Would:

- Effectively end West Virginia's expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which covers 180,000 West Virginians and provides vital support to the state's rural hospitals;
- Radically overhaul - and sharply cut - the underlying Medicaid program, through which many West Virginia seniors, children, and people with disabilities get their coverage;
- Increase premiums, deductibles, or both for most of the roughly 30,000 West Virginians who purchase health coverage through the marketplace, especially older people;
- Weaken protections for West Virginians who purchase individual market coverage, which would be especially harmful for people with pre-existing conditions; and
- Potentially result in the return of annual and lifetime limits for a significant share of the roughly 700,000 West Virginians with job-based coverage.

By taking coverage and consumer protections from so many West Virginians, the Senate bill also would make it harder for those struggling with substance use disorders (SUDs) to get needed treatment, undermining West Virginia's efforts to address the opioid crisis.

Additional funding for treatment that Senate Republicans reportedly will add to their bill would fall far short of offsetting the enormous damage that the underlying Senate bill would cause.

"There are many opportunities for Congress to improve our health care system," said Boettner said. "But this bill can't be fixed: the Senate needs to start over and take a different, bipartisan approach."

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