

HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA NOW!

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New Report: Kennedy-Mikulski HELP Committee Bill Makes Good Health Care More Affordable Than Senate Finance Committee Bill

Typical Maryland Family to Spend \$784 Less If Senate Passes HELP Committee Legislation

Baltimore, MD - According to a new report released today by the Maryland partners of [Health Care for America Now](#) (HCAN) – the nation’s largest health reform campaign – Senator Kennedy’s HELP Bill – passed in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee with strong support from Maryland’s own Senator Barbara Mikulski – is \$784 more affordable than the Senate Finance Bill for Maryland’s families and businesses.

A typical Maryland family of three earning \$81,811 a year – the state median income – would pay \$784 less in premiums and out-of-pocket costs under the HELP bill.

A typical American family of four earning \$55,100 a year – roughly the national median income – would pay \$3,900 less in premiums and out-of-pocket costs under the HELP Committee bill compared to the Finance Committee bill.

The HELP bill builds on employer-based coverage, protecting the 60.5% of Marylanders who get their health coverage through work, but under the Finance bill, employers are not required to offer or help pay for coverage at all.

“This report finds that Maryland families will have good, affordable health care if the Senate enacts the HELP Committee bill instead of the Finance Committee bill,” said Matthew Weinstein, Maryland Coordinator for Health Care for America Now and Federal Issues Director for Progressive Maryland. “We urge our Senators to support the HELP Committee bill so that people in Maryland can get a guarantee of good coverage at work or be able to truly afford coverage if they need to buy it outside of work.”

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Other Findings and Provisions:

- HELP sets Medicaid eligibility at or below 150 percent of federal poverty. Finance sets eligibility at or below 133 percent.
- HELP offers people in the health insurance exchange the choice of a public health insurance option which will lower premiums and force private insurance companies to compete. Finance does not.
- Finance raises revenue through a 40% tax on over one-third of health plans, a tax that will get passed through from insurers to employers to employees and make health care less affordable for working families.

“The fair way to pay for health care reform is to ask households making more than \$250,000 a year to contribute a little more,” said Weinstein. “In some cases, we’re talking about a surcharge of as little as \$10. The Senate Finance Committee’s bill puts a much larger burden on those who are already struggling.”

The report was released today at simultaneous noon rallies at the Baltimore office of Senator Ben Cardin and the Annapolis office of Senator Barbara Mikulski. The rallies today were led by HCAN National Steering Committee member organization MoveOn.org with the support of the other Maryland state partners of the massive national Health Care for America Now campaign. Televised coverage of the rally can be viewed at http://www.foxbaltimore.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wbff_vid_1753.shtml.

Both of Maryland’s U.S. Senators have been health reform champions, signing a letter last week along with 30 of their colleagues calling on the Senate leadership to include a public option in the final bill brought to the Senate floor. In addition, Sen. Cardin circulated a letter warning of the dangers of the Senate Finance Committee’s employer penalty “free-rider” provision, which would discourage firms from hiring workers from low- and moderate-income families and impose substantial new administrative burdens on employers. Sen. Mikulski is a senior member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee and a champion of health reform, including affordability protections and the public option.

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