

Durbin, Duckworth, Schakowsky & Illinois Democrats urge Rauner to weigh in on Republican health care repeal bill

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-09), along with every Democratic member of the Illinois Congressional delegation, once again called on Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner to explain how Republicans’ plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act will affect Illinois families, schools and students, health care providers, and the state’s economy. The members expressed concern that the Republican health care repeal bill—which passed the House without any hearings or analysis from the Congressional Budget Office—would rip health insurance away from more than one million people in the state of Illinois.

The members wrote: “There is no question that the AHCA would be incredibly damaging to the state of Illinois. According to the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA), which opposes the bill, Illinois would lose \$40 billion in federal Medicaid funding over the next ten years.”

The IHA also estimates that the state would see up to \$8.4 billion in reduced economic activity every year, resulting in a loss of up to 60,000 Illinois jobs. Highlighting the fact that other Republican Governors have opposed the disastrous Republican repeal bill, the members demanded an answer from Governor Rauner on why he has stayed silent while health care for millions in Illinois hangs in the balance.

“Despite clear evidence that the AHCA would be devastating to Illinois, you have yet to forcibly denounce this legislation, answer questions regarding how it would impact Illinois at the state level, or provide recommendations on policies you either support or oppose to improve care for residents of our state. That is in clear contrast to other Republican Governors, especially from Medicaid expansion states, who have publicly and forcefully stated their opposition to the AHCA and offered ideas and recommendations on how to move forward,” wrote the members.

Along with Sens. Durbin and Duckworth and U.S. Rep. Schakowsky, the letter was signed by U.S. Representatives Danny K. Davis (D-IL-07), Bobby Rush (D-IL-01), Luis Guterrez (D-IL-04), Mike Quigley (D-IL-05), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL-08), Brad Schneider (D-IL-10), Bill Foster (D-IL-11), Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17), Robin Kelly (D-IL02), and Dan Lipinski (D-IL-03).

In January, Sens. Durbin and Duckworth [urged](#) Governor Rauner to stand by Illinoisans and oppose repeal of our health care system. They also called for his concrete recommendations on how to improve the health care system across Illinois. They did not receive a response. In February, every House Democrat from Illinois sent [a similar letter](#) to Governor Rauner. They did not receive a response. Sens. Durbin and Duckworth sent a [follow-up letter](#) to Gov. Rauner in March, once again requesting input on how the Republican health care repeal plan will harm Illinois and seeking his concrete recommendations on how to improve the current health care system. They did not receive a response this time either.

“We hope that, this time, you will acknowledge our letter and provide detailed answers to our questions. Time is of the essence, as Senate Republicans are currently working behind closed doors to advance repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA),” the letter states.

Full text of today’s letter is available below:

June 6, 2017

Dear Governor Rauner,

We write to express our serious concerns about your lack of vocal public opposition to the American Health Care Act (AHCA) and your failure to provide the critical information we requested detailing how Illinois would be impacted by this legislation. The recent analysis from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has once again shown the dire consequences that the House-passed bill would have on our country, and disproportionately so on Illinois. Despite clear evidence that the AHCA would be devastating to Illinois, you have yet to forcibly denounce this legislation, answer questions regarding how it would impact Illinois at the state level, or provide recommendations on policies you either support or oppose to improve care for residents of our state. That is in clear contrast to other Republican Governors, especially from Medicaid expansion states, who have publicly and forcefully stated their opposition to the AHCA and offered ideas and recommendations on how to move forward.

There is no question that the AHCA would be incredibly damaging to the state of Illinois. According to the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA), which opposes the bill, Illinois would lose \$40 billion in federal Medicaid funding over the next ten years. Given the ongoing and unfortunate budget crisis in Springfield, the state of Illinois would very likely be unable to replace that loss of federal funding, and, as a result, Medicaid beneficiaries in our state would see their benefits cut or would be ineligible for coverage altogether. All told, more than one million people in the state of Illinois would lose insurance coverage if the AHCA became law. In addition, the IHA estimates that the state would see up to \$8.4 billion in reduced economic activity every year, resulting in a loss of up to 60,000 Illinois jobs. Simply put, the AHCA would be catastrophic for our state's residents, hospitals, and economy. And yet, you and your Administration have remained largely silent.

As if that were not bad enough, CBO clearly states that under the AHCA, people with pre-existing conditions would be unable to afford health insurance in many states under the AHCA, posing a clear threat to the 5.5 million non-elderly residents in Illinois with pre-existing conditions. In addition, there is simply no guarantee that Illinois residents would have access to insurance plans with the full range of essential health benefits, including prescription drug coverage, maternity care, mental health and substance abuse treatment services, or even emergency services. The AHCA imposes an "age tax" on Illinois residents ages fifty to sixty-four, many of whom would see their premiums skyrocket. For example, a 64 year-old making \$26,500 a year could see a premium increase of between 700 and 847 percent. That defies every promise made by Republicans to protect people with pre-existing conditions and lower health care costs. Finally, the AHCA breaks yet another promise from the Trump Administration to

protect health care for veterans. By slashing Medicaid, AHCA jeopardizes access to care for the 60,000 Illinois veterans who rely on the program for their health coverage. The bill also cuts off marketplace tax credits to an estimated 7 million veterans nationwide who are receiving their health care outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Once again, we seek answers from you to help inform us, our Republican colleagues who voted for this bill, and your constituents about the impact of the AHCA on Illinois. We would appreciate answers to the following questions:

1. If the Medicaid changes included in the American Health Care Act become law, would Illinois be able to cover the increased costs—in both the short- and long-term—without reducing coverage, restricting eligibility, or limiting benefits?
2. Where would Illinois find the additional funding if forced to increase spending five-fold in order to maintain coverage for the Medicaid expansion population beginning in 2020? How would the state prioritize this funding against other spending needs?
3. If the dramatic funding reductions for the Medicaid expansion population and the per-capita cap structure were realized, would the state be financially able to implement its proposed Section 1115 Medicaid waiver? How would the state balance funding newly requested authorities under the proposed waiver while maintaining coverage of existing required services under the state's Medicaid program?
4. How would the Medicaid funding reductions included in the Republican repeal plan impact services provided to Illinois children in our schools, including children receiving services as part of a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?
5. How would the Medicaid funding reductions included in the Republican repeal plan impact funding for Illinois' municipally-owned hospitals, health clinics, correctional facilities, and other publically-funded facilities?
6. How would the Medicaid funding reductions included in the Republican repeal plan impact Illinois' hospitals statewide, especially those in rural and under-served areas?
7. Which proposals in the American Health Care Act do you believe will hurt Illinoisans and which did you believe will benefit our constituents?
8. How would eliminating Planned Parenthood from Illinois's Medicaid program affect access to comprehensive reproductive health services for Medicaid beneficiaries?

You remained silent while every House Republican from the state of Illinois analyzed this bill and cast his vote for the AHCA. We believe it is incumbent upon state leaders, particularly Governors, to weigh in and speak up when massive federal changes are being proposed that would likely pose serious and immediate health and economic dangers to residents of their state. You still have a chance. We hope that, this time, you will acknowledge our letter and provide detailed answers to our questions. Time is of

the essence, as Senate Republicans are currently working behind closed doors to advance repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).