House GOP resolves differences over Tennessee spending plan

Yanamaria Joaquin

May 9, 2017

According to a recent report from the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, 23 percent of Utahns under age 65, close to 400,000 people, have pre-existing conditions that could be the basis for jacking up premiums. It would dilute Obama's consumer-friendly insurance coverage requirements, like letting states permit insurers to charge higher premiums for customers with pre-existing medical conditions.

Tax credits. The flat tax credit approach is flawed, because it will price the low-income near-elderly out of the market.

Now that the Republicans' bill has passed the House, the GOP's effort to *repeal* and replace Obamacare faces fresh hurdles in the Senate as lawmakers there plan to write their own version on their own time. The top medical industry groups representing doctors, hospitals, and insurers are raising similar concerns, along with key Republican senators whose support will be needed to pass a bill. Even if we can give them something that doesn't give them access to care.

Senate Finance Committee Chair Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) warned that his colleagues needed to be realistic if they hoped to move a bill in a chamber where the GOP holds a thin 52-48 margin. "In fact, it will probably have to be re-envisioned entirely".

The plan passed after Rep. Fred Upton of MI, an early holdout, had $8 billion added to the bill's "high-risk pools" meant to help cover people with pre-existing conditions.

Under the 2010 Affordable Care Act, individual health coverage must be offered to people with pre-existing conditions, which can be anything from asthma, acne and obesity to cancer, heart disease and AIDS.

"Not only would this jeopardize insurance availability for the one-third of Americans who have preexisting conditions", said DeGette, "it would let insurance companies deny coverage altogether for maternity, for emergency room, for mental health, and for other essential benefits".

"This is a first step in fixing the issues of the high out-of-pocket costs of health care premiums and the bureaucracy of the ACA, though it is not a ideal bill", Stivers said in a statement regarding the bill. He says the bill will allow states to apply for a waiver to fund high risk polls thereby providing coverage for those with pre-existing conditions. It also would cut Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor and disabled. "Senators are very independent people", he said.

And Alexander didn't put any timeline on Senate passage of a bill.

"We do not have enough for Medicare, we do not have enough for Social Security, we do not have enough for *Medicaid* - before we got started on the expansion of *Medicaid*", Paul said Friday during a speech at the Cato Institute.