

## **Enough GOP senators to block Obamacare replacement will announce opposition**

Leslie Hanson

June 23, 2017

The closely guarded Senate health care bill written entirely behind closed doors finally became public Thursday in a do-or-die moment for the Republican Party's winding efforts to repeal Obamacare.

The House waiver allowing higher premiums for some people with pre-existing serious illnesses was added shortly before that chamber approved its bill last month and helped attract conservative support.

Although Medicaid expansion gave more Kentuckians the right to health care, Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute think tank, agrees with Paul's assessment that increasing the number of people guaranteed care does not lead to those people receiving better or more affordable care.

"It makes no sense to single out Planned Parenthood from all of the Medicaid provider and say that it can't be a Medicaid provider", Collins said.

The Senate bill would also reduce subsidies now provided to help people without workplace coverage get private health insurance, said Caroline Pearson, a senior vice president of the health care consulting firm Avalare Health.

Medicaid represents 38 percent of federal funds coming into Montana. Unlimited federal dollars now flow to each state for Medicaid, covering all eligible beneficiaries and services.

But it would allow states to waive the federal mandate on what insurers must cover, known as the essential health benefits.

The 142-page draft of the bill, which would eliminate much of the Obama health-care law, proposes steep cuts to Medicaid. Cruz released a separate statement in which he called for the bill to "do more to ensure consumers have the freedom to choose among more affordable plans that are tailored for their individual healthcare needs".

Repeal a tax penalty for people who do not get health insurance, saving them \$38 billion over the next decade.

However, he also said he still needed more time to study it before deciding if he'd support it, and in particular wanted feedback from his home state's governor on Medicaid provisions. And Susan Collins of ME reiterated her opposition to language blocking federal money for Planned Parenthood, which many Republicans oppose because it provides abortions. "There was 25 days of debate and hundred of amendments including 180 or something like that, Republican amendments included, in the Affordable Care Act".

Initial signs indicated the bill could be in trouble if the Kentucky Republican intends to subject it to a vote before lawmakers leave Washington for the July 4 recess.

Sen. Roger Wicker of MS expressed some disappointment that the new bill still resembles Obamacare in some aspects. "And the tax credits in the bill will also be better designed".

Tester is holding a town hall to discuss the health care bill Saturday in Great Falls at the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, 501 Bay Drive. "I want to hear from my bosses, the people of Montana, about what they like and don't like about this legislation", Tester said.

McConnell's fellow Kentuckyian, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, of OR said in a statement. And Lee complained in a Facebook video on Wednesday that he hadn't even seen the draft bill. The Senate bill would repeal the tax this year.

"I look forward to studying this bill and receiving input from Montanans on its impact", Gianforte said.

"I believe most Hoosiers, like myself, are sick and exhausted of nearly a decade of partisan debates about health care".

The Congressional Budget Office has not yet released its assessment of the bill.

Gov. Steve Bullock, a Democrat, said Thursday that the bill does not improve on the previous version and will still increase costs and cut coverage.

While the draft bill has drawn criticism from around the country, and especially from Democrats, U.S. President Donald Trump said he's happy with the overall proposal.

While many moderate Republicans expressed concerns, it was a groups of conservative Republican senators who stated they would not vote for the bill as now written because it didn't go far enough in repealing Obamacare.

Aaron Wernham, the CEO of Montana Health Care Foundation, said Thursday that after briefly reviewing the bill, it appears the two main concerns for Montana - the federal enhanced matching funds for Medicaid expansion and the per capita cap on how much the federal government will pay for Medicaid enrollees - are still in the Senate bill. Then it switches to the general inflation rate, which is lower than House bill.