

# Congressional Dems, Ryan respond to CBO score on House health care bill

Posted on Tuesday, Mar 14, 2017

Congressional Dems are slamming the House GOP's health care bill after the Congressional Budget Office estimated 24 million people would lose coverage by 2026.

But House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Janesville, said the long-awaited CBO report shows premiums will be lower and the deficit will drop. He also said the report didn't consider two other parts of the House GOP's three-pronged approach, as it only looked at the American Health Care Act.

CBO predicted the bill would reduce federal deficits by \$337 billion by 2026, largely due to decreased Medicaid spending and eliminating the Affordable Care Act's subsidies for the individual market.

It predicted 14 million people would become uninsured next year under the bill, largely due to the bill's elimination of the individual mandate under the ACA. The uninsured number would go up in the following years as other changes kick in, such as the bill's phasing out of the ACA Medicaid expansion.

The bill eliminates the ACA's income-based tax credits and replaces them with tax credits based on age, though the credits are significantly less generous for elderly Americans than the ACA credits. Those tax credits go toward helping people pay premiums, but the House GOP bill also would eliminate ACA cost-sharing subsidies that help people pay for things like physician copays.

The CBO predicted premiums would go up in the individual market until 2020 but would decline after that due to other changes the House GOP bill makes. That includes, for instance, letting insurers charge older enrollees five times more than they charge younger ones; the ACA limited that ratio to three-to-one.

The report says by 2026, average premiums in the individual market would be 10

percent lower under the House GOP plan than they would be under the ACA.

“Even though the new tax credits would be structured differently from the current subsidies and would generally be less generous for those receiving subsidies under current law, the other changes would, in the agencies’ view, lower average premiums enough to attract a sufficient number of relatively healthy people to stabilize the market,” CBO wrote in the analysis, which it conducted with staff at the Joint Committee on Taxation.

Ryan said the report confirms the bill “will lower premiums and improve access to quality, affordable care.” He also highlighted the tax cuts under the bill and said that it would “dramatically reduce the deficit.”

“I recognize and appreciate concerns about making sure people have access to coverage,” Ryan said. “Under Obamacare, we have seen how government-mandated coverage does not equal access to care, and now the law is collapsing. Our plan is not about forcing people to buy expensive, one-size-fits-all coverage. It is about giving people more choices and better access to a plan they want and can afford.”

But U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin said the House GOP bill is “putting millions of people at risk of losing health care coverage and forcing millions to pay more for less care.”

“The people of Wisconsin did not send me to Washington to take people’s health care away and I will not support repealing the guaranteed health insurance protections and care that people have today,” the Madison Dem said. “I will not support higher costs, fewer people with health care coverage and more economic insecurity for Wisconsin families.”

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, said the report “proves what we already knew — millions of Americans will lose coverage” under the bill, which he noted would ensure “the wealthiest few get a massive tax cut.”

U.S. Reps. Ron Kind and Gwen Moore took to Facebook to blast the health care plan, with Kind, D-La Crosse, saying the report “raises serious red flags,” especially in terms of higher insurance premiums for older Wisconsin residents and the loss of health care coverage.

Moore, meanwhile, said the CBO’s projections are “far worse than we expected.”

“Put simply: President Donald J. Trump’s health care proposal is a major public health crisis waiting to happen,” the Milwaukee Dem wrote.

See the CBO report:

[www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/americanhealthcareact\\_0.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/americanhealthcareact_0.pdf)