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How could the ACA repeal affect Pennsylvania?

Members of Congress, mainly those of the Republican Party, did not waste any time starting the process of repealing the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (also known as ACA or Obamacare). Repealing this Act was one of President Trump's campaign promises, and something that Republicans have been trying to accomplish for more than 6 years. A recent report by the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, entitled "Devastation, Death, and Deficits: The Impact of ACA Repeal on Pennsylvania," states that the ACA "has had a dramatic impact in reshaping the provision of health care in the United States at a time when health care amounts to 18% of the United States economy." Republicans pushing for repeal of the ACA have not offered any alternative to date. As such, this report (www.pennbpc.org) concludes that the repeal of the ACA will be very harmful to Pennsylvanians.

This report is worth reading. The executive summary tells us that an outright repeal of the ACA without any reasonable alternative will be costly. The conclusions for Pennsylvania in particular include:

- If two key parts of the ACA, that is Medicaid expansion and tax credit subsidies for insurance purchased through the health care exchanges, were to be eliminated, then more than 1.1 million Pennsylvanians would lose their health insurance. As a result, an additional 3,425 premature deaths would occur each year.
- Revenues for hospitals and other healthcare providers will decline substantially. People will still seek medical care but without insurance and more providers will not be able to bill for that care. Some physician practices and hospitals in urban and very rural areas may not survive due to the level of uncompensated care provided.
- If the ACA is repealed, over 137,000 Pennsylvanians will lose their jobs, the state's gross domestic product will be reduced by over \$75 billion and state and local tax revenues will be cut by \$2.4 billion (over 5 years).
- This will add over \$1.4 billion to the state's structural deficit.

The above are stark figures. There are other ramifications of the appeal that may not be as obvious. Many people have depended upon the availability of this insurance program including those with pre-existing conditions. For example, people who apply for Social Security Disability (SSDI) do not qualify for Medicare until 25 months after approval for SSDI. By definition, these folks have a pre-existing condition and being able to have insurance options until Medicare is available is very important. The disabled community appreciated having access to insurance that would allow them to hold down a job and be productive members of the community. The coverage of essential health benefits and free preventative care will be a significant loss to many current enrollees in the ACA.

The plan is to begin the process of repeal through the budget reconciliation process. This strategy would allow repeal of some parts of the ACA by allowing the Senate to act with a majority (51 votes) instead of a supermajority of 60 votes. The Medicaid expansion provision and the tax credits can be repealed this way. The individual mandate (requiring everyone to purchase insurance or pay a penalty) and the employer mandate (requiring all employers with 50 or more employees to provide insurance or pay a penalty) could also be repealed.

The ACA is not perfect but many provisions have popular support. Consider contacting your US Representative and/or Senator to encourage them to really look at the legislation and not to repeal it without any reasonable alternative and careful study of the consequences.