

MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors

From: Scott Mulhauser and Erin Shields for Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.)

Re: Baucus Comments on New Report Showing Benefits of the Health Care Law

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) commented today on the importance of the nation's new health care law after a study was released showing that without the protections included in the law, more than 50 million Americans with pre-existing conditions like high blood pressure or asthma could be dropped by their health insurance company or denied coverage. Baucus was a lead architect of the Affordable Care Act, which will bar discrimination against the tens of millions of Americans who are living with these health care conditions when it is fully implemented in 2014, and already bars discrimination against children who are born with or develop health conditions.

“Those who take medication for high blood pressure or develop arthritis as they grow older could be at risk of losing health care coverage without the protections in the new health care law,” said Baucus. **“So many of us in Montana and across the country know someone who has lost their coverage after getting sick – just when they need it the most, and we’ve seen how hard it is for that person, that family and that community. The new health care law creates common-sense protections so insurance companies can’t just drop folks diagnosed with a condition that is expensive to treat or deny coverage when it’s needed most. Treatment decisions should be made by doctors and patients, not insurance companies, and that’s why we simply can’t afford to repeal this new law. Repealing the health care law would end these critical protections, return us to the day when insurance companies called the shots and put more than 50 million Americans at risk of losing coverage – and that’s a risk we simply can’t afford to take.”**

The new report released today by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) found that anywhere from 50 to 129 million (or 19 to 50 percent) of Americans under age 65 have some type of pre-existing condition, such as heart disease, cancer, asthma, high blood pressure or arthritis. The protections in the Affordable Care Act prevent insurance companies from denying coverage, charging higher premiums or limiting benefits to people based on these types of conditions.

The study also provides other new data about the risks associated with pre-existing conditions. It found:

- **Older Americans** - older Americans between ages 55 and 64 are at particular risk, with 48 to 86 percent of people in that age bracket living with a pre-existing condition.
- **High Risk for All** - although they are in perfectly good health today, 15 to 30 percent of people under age 65 are likely to develop a pre-existing condition over the next eight years.
- **Barrier to Care** - nearly one in five Americans under age 65 with a pre-existing condition, or 25 million individuals, is uninsured.

The Affordable Care Act is already protecting people from discriminatory practices by insurance companies. Insurers can no longer limit the amount of coverage provided to someone over a lifetime to a fixed dollar amount or take away coverage because of a mistake on an application. Parents have the option of continuing to cover their young adult children up to age 26 on their plan if their kids lack

access to job-based insurance of their own and insurers cannot deny coverage to children because of any pre-existing condition.

Many uninsured Americans with pre-existing health conditions already have coverage because of the Affordable Care Act through the Pre-existing Condition Insurance Plan (PCIP), which provides private insurance to people who are denied affordable coverage because of a pre-existing condition. The PCIP program – which has already saved people’s lives by covering services like chemotherapy – serves as a bridge until 2014, when it will be against the law for insurance companies to deny or limit coverage or charge higher premiums because of a pre-existing condition.

Today’s report can be found on the HHS website at <http://www.healthcare.gov/center/reports/preexisting.html>.

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