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BAUCUS BLASTS DEEP MEDICARE CUTS IN HOUSE REPUBLICAN PROPOSAL

Finance Chairman Responds To Seniors' Health Care Cuts: "Not On My Watch."

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today blasted a House Republican budget proposal to cut more than \$2 trillion in health care benefits and nursing home coverage for seniors. According to the Wall Street Journal, the proposal would “essentially end Medicare” as it exists today and instead funnel Medicare dollars to private insurance companies to cover only a portion of seniors’ coverage, cutting seniors’ benefits and increasing their costs. Under the budget proposed today by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.), seniors would be forced to pay thousands of dollars more for their health care coverage. They would no longer enjoy guaranteed benefits or coverage, and insurance companies would be allowed to increase seniors’ costs or drop their coverage if they get sick.

“Independent experts agree the House Plan would make deep cuts to the Medicare benefits seniors count on,” said Baucus. **“It would end Medicare as we know it and funnel Medicare dollars directly into private insurance companies’ pockets. Under the House plan, seniors’ coverage would be cut drastically, benefits would no longer be guaranteed and seniors’ costs would skyrocket. We can’t allow the House to balance the budget on the backs of seniors and we won’t – not on my watch.”**

Today, the promise of Medicare means seniors’ will always receive the coverage they need and doctors, hospitals, treatments, surgeries and medicines will always be covered. And to receive these benefits, seniors have low, fixed costs like deductibles and co-pays.

Under the House budget plan, Medicare would be disassembled and converted into a “voucher-like” program. Under this plan, seniors would have to wade through significant paperwork and fine print to find a private plan that covered their medical needs. But that plan wouldn’t necessarily cover the unforeseen medical conditions seniors could face over the course of the year. If seniors’ were faced with a condition not covered by their private plan, they would have to pay 100 percent of the cost out-of-pocket.

The House plan would create a National Insurance Exchange, or a Washington-based marketplace where seniors would select a private health insurance plan. Plans would receive seniors’ vouchers, but those vouchers would not cover the cost of a plan with the same benefits Medicare has today. For coverage equal to the benefits Medicare offers today, seniors would have to pay much of the total cost, often thousands of dollars more, out of pocket.

And, under the House plan, private insurance companies would be allowed to discriminate against seniors with pre-existing medical conditions such as high-blood pressure and diabetes. Insurance companies would charge more for seniors as they grow older and if they develop expensive conditions, including cancer.

The Republican budget also cuts more than \$2 trillion in other critical health care services. These cuts could entirely eliminate seniors' access to nursing home and home health care services. Without these benefits, seniors would be forced to pay 100 percent of these costs.

Baucus said today that he supports efforts to balance the Federal budget, but insists that proposals are responsible and protect seniors. Baucus was a key author of the Affordable Care Act, which created new benefits for seniors in Medicare and made the program more fiscally sustainable, extending the fiscal solvency of the program by an additional twelve years, to 2029.

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