

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

**Congress of the United States****House of Representatives****COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

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February 5, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Chairwoman Eshoo:

We request that the Committee on Energy and Commerce hold a hearing on the Democratic Medicare for All proposal. Medicare for All was a critical issue in the last election among Democrats running for the House of Representatives, and there are important questions about the proposal that the Committee should investigate.

The American people should hear how House Democrats expect to address the massive costs associated with Medicare for All. Given the Committee's broad health care jurisdiction, we have a responsibility to review any legislative proposal that is supported by so many members of the House majority, especially one that threatens to impact directly the lives of millions of Americans by upending how they receive their coverage, including those with employer and union sponsored plans.

According to a recent media report, Speaker Nancy Pelosi supports holding hearings on Medicare for All.<sup>1</sup> It has also been reported the Budget Committee intends to hold hearings on the proposal,<sup>2</sup> and the Budget Committee Chairman John Yarmuth has requested the Congressional Budget Office produce a report on the "design and policy considerations lawmakers would face in developing single-payer health system proposals."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter Sullivan, *Pelosi supports holding hearings on "Medicare for all,"* THE HILL (Jan. 3, 2019), available at <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/423690-pelosi-supports-holding-congressional-hearings-on-medicare-for-all>.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from The Honorable John A. Yarmuth, Chairman, H. Budget Committee to Keith Hall, Director, Congressional Budget Office (Jan. 8, 2019), available at [https://budget.house.gov/sites/democrats.budget.house.gov/files/documents/1.8.19.Request%20for%20report%20on%20single-payer\\_0.pdf](https://budget.house.gov/sites/democrats.budget.house.gov/files/documents/1.8.19.Request%20for%20report%20on%20single-payer_0.pdf).

It has also been reported that Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal is open to a hearing on Medicare for All.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the only report of Medicare for All hearings at the Energy and Commerce Committee was a statement by Health Subcommittee Chairwoman Anna Eshoo, which was soon withdrawn when she indicated “that her subcommittee needed to prioritize shoring up Obamacare and crafting sweeping drug price reforms.”<sup>5</sup> It is unfortunate that the Committee is not leading on this matter, particularly when, in the 115th Congress, the *Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act*, was referred primarily to this Committee.<sup>6</sup>

To be clear, the Republican members of the Committee oppose moving to the government run, single option health care system envisioned in the Democrat’s Medicare for All proposal for several reasons. The federal debt is currently more than \$21 trillion, and it is estimated that Medicare for All could increase the total amount that the government spends on health care by at least \$32.6 trillion over the first 10 years.<sup>7</sup> A hearing would provide the opportunity for the Committee to understand how such a program could be paid for.

We are also concerned that the Democrat’s Medicare for All proposal will outlaw private insurance in America. That means that not only would 158 million Americans who get health insurance through their employer or union lose their current coverage,<sup>8</sup> but the millions of other Americans who buy private insurance and the millions of seniors who get coverage through the popular Medicare Advantage program would also lose their current plan. In our view, families and individuals are in the best position to decide what type of plan they need, and that right should not be taken away.

We are also concerned that the Democratic Medicare for All proposal will end Medicare as we know it by draining the Medicare Trust Funds that millions of seniors have paid into their entire lives. According to the Congressional Research Service,<sup>9</sup> Medicare for All would use existing federal health funds, including the Medicare trust funds – in addition to massive tax increases – to fund the proposal. Raiding the Medicare trust funds would jeopardize the care of millions of seniors. The current Medicare program is running a deficit, with the Hospital

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Sullivan, *Incoming Dem chairman open to hearing on “Medicare for all,”* THE HILL (Dec. 11, 2018), available at <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/420894-incoming-dem-chairman-open-to-hearing-on-medicare-for-all>.

<sup>5</sup> Dan Diamond, *Health committees finalized in new Congress*, POLITICO (Jan. 17, 2019), available at <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-pulse/2019/01/17/health-committees-finalized-in-new-congress-482627>.

<sup>6</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Summary of H.R. 676, Expanded and Improved Medicare For All Act, 115th Congress (Jan. 24, 2017)*, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bills/115th-congress/house-bill/676>.

<sup>7</sup> H. Budget Committee, *Budget Busters: Medicare-for-All* (Sept. 7, 2018), available at [https://mailchi.mp/2f08767534cc/balance\\_budget\\_amendment-459029?e=7f4d75a21c](https://mailchi.mp/2f08767534cc/balance_budget_amendment-459029?e=7f4d75a21c); and Urban Institute, *The Sanders Single-Payer Health Care Plan: The Effect on National Health Expenditures and Federal and Private Spending* (May 9, 2016), available at <https://republicans-budget.house.gov/budget-buster/medicare-for-all/>.

<sup>8</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *Federal Subsidies for Health Insurance Coverage for People Under Age 65: 2018-2028* (May 2018), available at <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files?file=2018-06/53826-healthinsurancecoverage.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Information Requested about H.R. 676, as Introduced in the 115th Congress* (Aug. 31, 2018), available at <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/H.R.-676-Memo-Final-083118.pdf>.

Insurance Trust Fund scheduled to go bankrupt in 2026 – at which time it will no longer be able to pay full benefits. Instead of shoring up the program, Democrats want to raid Medicare's trust fund to pay for a government takeover of health care, making an already tenuous financial situation even worse for the seniors and other beneficiaries who currently enjoy and depend on their Medicare benefits.

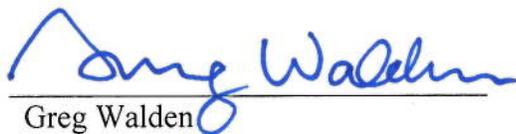
When a new government plan cannot assist or afford all those eligible to receive benefits, massive tax increases and benefit cuts will be the only way to support it. The Democratic Medicare for All proposal breaks the promises made to seniors, the disabled, service members, and others by eliminating the Medicaid program, TRICARE, the Indian Health Service (IHS), and puts a target on the benefits veterans receive from the VA.

The cost to fund the Democratic Medicare for All proposal would lead to a total federal takeover of health care system and destroy thousands of privately-owned health care providers. It would mandate all physicians be employed by public, or not-for-profit institutions, and that would mean more than 1,000 private for-profit hospitals would be prohibited from assisting those in need, leaving 150,000 hospital beds potentially unused.

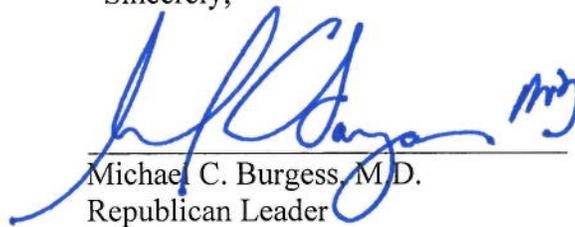
The Energy and Commerce Committee has the broadest health care jurisdiction in Congress, and any serious discussion about the Democratic Medicare for All proposal should start with here. Since Medicare for All is at the top of the Democratic Party's legislative agenda, the Committee should start holding hearings on the proposal.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to seeing Medicare for All hearings on the Committee on Energy and Commerce's schedule in the very near future.

Sincerely,



Greg Walden  
Republican Leader



Michael C. Burgess, M.D.  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Health