

Altmire Votes to Prevent Severe Medicaid Cuts to Pennsylvania

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The Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act (H.R. 5613) will delay for one year the implementation of seven rules issued by the Administration that curtail federal payments for rehabilitative, outpatient and administrative services offered by Medicaid. Congressman Altmire is a co-sponsor of the bill, which passed by a vote of 349-62.

"Congress made the right decision in stepping in to prevent the Bush Administration from slashing federal support for Medicaid at the time when states like Pennsylvania can least afford it," Altmire said. "Given our slowing economy, Pennsylvania's Medicaid rolls are likely to grow and its tax revenue is likely to decrease over the next year. Eliminating federal funding for Medicaid on top of this could have jeopardized Pennsylvanians' access to much-needed health services."

The Administration's rules would have affected: payments provided to public safety net institutions; coverage of rehabilitation services for people with disabilities; school-based outreach and enrollment for children qualifying for Medicaid; specialized medical transportation to school for children with disabilities; payments for graduate medical education to help doctors meet Medicaid patients' needs; coverage of hospital outpatient benefits, including dental and vision care; case management services for people with disabilities; state provider tax laws; and appeals filed through HHS.

A report issued by Families USA last week found that if these funding cuts are fully implemented, Pennsylvania would lose an estimated \$427.4 million over five years. Not only does The Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act stop this harmful funding shortfall, it also provides a more effective way to cut Medicaid costs by strengthening efforts to combat fraud and abuse.

"Medicaid is a successful program in part because the cost of providing Medicaid benefits is shared between the state and the federal government," Altmire said. "As we move forward, we need to make sure that the federal government works with states — instead of imposing unnecessary mandates — to ensure Americans with disabilities and low-income families have access to high-quality health care services. We need to focus on curtailing Medicaid spending by eliminating waste, not by unilaterally cutting benefits that people need."

