

Defending Health Care in 2017: What's at Stake for Alaska

With a new president and Congress, the health care gains made throughout the last six years face their greatest threat yet. Congress has voted more than 60 times to roll back the historic progress that has been made to expand health coverage to millions of people in this country and to improve coverage for those who already had it. These proposed changes will put the health—and lives—of countless Alaskans at risk. Here's what Alaska stands to lose if the new president and Congress move forward to upend our health care system:

Tens of thousands of Alaskans stand to lose health coverage

62,000 Alaskans stand to lose their health coverage.¹

Alaska stands to lose **\$3 billion** in federal funding for Medicaid, CHIP, and financial assistance for marketplace coverage.²

Approximately **16,000** Alaskans who currently get financial assistance to help pay for their health coverage will lose this help and will no longer have affordable coverage options. In 2016, Alaskans receiving financial assistance saw their monthly premiums reduced on average **\$750** thanks to this help.³

The now-historically low rate of uninsured people will spike, with the number of uninsured in Alaska increasing **53 percent** by 2019.⁴ This will reverse the immense progress that has been made to expand coverage. Between 2013 and 2015:

- » The number of uninsured in Alaska declined **19 percent.**⁵

- » Working Alaskans: The uninsured rate among working Alaskans saw a **24 percent** decline.⁶

Repeal will end Alaska's Medicaid expansion and cause ripple effects across the state economy

8,500 people stand to lose health coverage, most of whom are working.⁷ The Medicaid expansion has extended health coverage to lower-income Alaskans who hold down jobs that are the backbone of the state's economy—from fast food workers to home care attendants to construction workers to cashiers. Repeal will leave these hard working Alaskans out in the cold.

Alaska will lose millions in federal Medicaid funding. Over the course of a year and a half alone, Medicaid expansion brought **260 million** in federal dollars into the state economy.⁸ The impact of that lost federal Medicaid funding will have a ripple effect throughout the state economy, affecting hospitals, other health care providers, and businesses.

Alaskans with private health insurance will be stripped of vital protections against discrimination

Approximately **159,000** Alaskans with pre-existing conditions like asthma, diabetes, and cancer could once again be denied affordable, comprehensive coverage that actually covers their health care needs.⁹

Women in Alaska will once again be charged more for health coverage just for being a woman.

- » Prior to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), women in Alaska were charged as much as 32 percent more than men for the same coverage.¹⁰

Alaskans will once again face a world where insurance plans routinely cap the most they will pay for someone's health care in a year and in their lifetime, effectively cutting off coverage for the sickest individuals when they most need it.

- » Roughly **237,000** Alaskans (including **64,000** children) saw lifetime limits on coverage disappear thanks to the ACA's ban on these practices.¹¹

Hundreds of thousands of Alaskans will lose guaranteed coverage of free preventive services, like recommended cancer screenings and vaccines

Approximately **317,000** Alaskans with private health coverage (including **66,000** children) and **84,000** Alaska seniors on Medicare will lose guaranteed access to free preventive care, like blood pressure screenings, immunizations, and cancer screenings.^{12,13}

Insurance companies will no longer be required to put Alaskans' premiums toward care, not profits

Insurers will no longer be held accountable for using people's premium dollars on care and quality improvement or paying back the difference.

- » Alaskans have received around **\$5.4 million** in refunds from plans that overcharged for premiums since the ACA took effect.¹⁴

Thousands of seniors and people with disabilities will lose comprehensive drug coverage

The Medicare donut hole will re-open. This will leave Alaska's seniors and people with disabilities with a gap in prescription drug coverage and forced to pay thousands of dollars more in drug costs.

- » Seniors and people with disabilities in Alaska have saved **approximately \$13 million** on drug costs thanks to the ACA's closing the Medicare donut hole.¹⁵
- » In 2015 alone, approximately **3,000** seniors and people with disabilities in Alaska saved on average **\$1,029** on drug costs.¹⁶

Sources available online.