



News from:
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**COMPTROLLER LEMBO: CT NEEDS A PUBLIC OPTION AND
MEDICARE FOR ALL TO MAKE HEALTH COVERAGE MORE
AFFORDABLE**

As the Congressional Budget Office today releases estimates on the cost of the Republican health care plan that threatens health care coverage for millions in Connecticut and across the country, Comptroller Kevin Lembo is calling for an expansion of the federal Medicare program providing health care for seniors and a state effort to create a public option.

In letters to Connecticut's U.S. Senators, Lembo called for expanding Medicare eligibility to all. He is also calling on a bipartisan Connecticut group to explore state-level action to institute a public option in the state's individual health care market.

Lembo said prompt action is necessary to ensure that millions of Americans, including hundreds of thousands in Connecticut – particularly those with pre-existing conditions – have access to high quality and affordable health care.

“The American Health Care Act recently passed by the House of Representatives, and proposals now under consideration by Republican Senators, are not health care reform – but an immoral and outrageous attack on millions of Americans, particularly those with pre-existing conditions, who would lose access to health care, all to provide tax breaks to billionaires,” Lembo wrote in a letter to U.S. Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy. “Today, I am calling for a Medicare option for all that would deliver comprehensive, high quality health care coverage to millions of Americans, not just seniors, and especially those being gouged by skyrocketing and unaffordable premiums.

“Medicare for all would be the most ideal solution – however, at a minimum, offering a Medicare buy-in to individuals at least age 55 would ensure that this group continues to have

access to high quality and affordable health care options.

“Federal action to expand Medicare would be the best course of action, but state officials cannot afford to sit idly while potentially hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents risk losing access to health care,” Lembo said.

In a separate letter to Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, who recently convened a bipartisan group to develop an action plan, Lembo wrote, “The increasing instability of Connecticut’s health care exchange and federal health care policies demands immediate action. The time has come for a public health insurance option.

“Connecticut’s existing exchange is broken,” Lembo said. “Only two carriers now remain in the exchange and both are considering withdrawal due to uncertainty regarding federal health reform and financial instability. A public option would ensure that more than 110,000 residents at risk of losing coverage will have at least one viable option to access affordable quality health coverage.”

Lembo said there is a path for Connecticut to pursue a public option. Section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows states to apply for innovation waivers that could allow states to develop their own insurance and delivery system innovations while still receiving the same level of total federal reimbursement.

Connecticut could potentially institute a public option by leveraging the purchasing power of the state’s existing large programs – Medicaid or the state employees plan – to create a plan with very low administrative overhead, Lembo said. The administrative savings would allow the plan to provide improved benefits and lower premiums.

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