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Gov. Wolf: Amid a Resurgence of COVID, We Must Protect the ACA, People and Our Health Care System

Landenberg, PA – As the number of positive COVID-19 cases rise in Pennsylvania and as we enter flu season, protecting the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and ensuring that all Pennsylvanians have access to health coverage are more important than ever, Governor Tom Wolf said today in Chester County. The governor was joined by local elected officials and representatives from local health care organizations.

“Pennsylvanians have a right to affordable and accessible health care, and I have always made it a priority to uphold that right. But good health care is even more important heading into flu season, in the middle of a pandemic, while cases of COVID-19 are starting to slowly rise again,” Gov. Wolf said. “When Pennsylvanians are unable to afford health care coverage, it puts their lives and health at risk, and without the health care coverage the ACA provides, Pennsylvanians may not be able to seek the preventive care that protects them and minimizes their vulnerability to more serious threats to their health, such as COVID.”

The governor noted that the current rush into a U.S. Supreme Court judicial nomination by Senate Republicans amid a presidential election is not only disrespectful to American voters, but also could have significant implications for the ACA, as the Supreme Court prepares to hear a case regarding its constitutionality. The governor has called on U.S. Senator Pat Toomey to uphold his own precedent from four years ago, and hold off on voting for a Supreme Court nominee until after the general election.

The ACA provides health care to more than 1 million Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvanians with pre-existing conditions are only guaranteed coverage due to provisions in the ACA, and they are at greater risk to contract COVID-19. COVID-19 has also been shown to have long-term negative effects on the health of some COVID patients, which could result in additional Pennsylvanians with chronic, pre-existing conditions in the wake of this pandemic.

COVID-19 could well become a pre-existing condition for a portion of the 7.8 million Americans who have contracted it. A repeal of the ACA is cruel and unacceptable at any time, but especially during a pandemic and start of the flu season.

"I'm honored Governor Wolf was able to join us in New Garden Township today to talk about affordable and accessible healthcare. Our families currently have a lot on their plates, but access to healthcare should not be one of their concerns," said state Rep. Christina Sappey (D-Chester). "We should be doing everything we can to remove barriers and to promote good health. Healthy communities are strong communities."

"In the face of ongoing uncertainty in the fight against COVID-19 and the beginning of our economic recovery, Pennsylvanians and families deserve to know they can count on their health care," said state Sen. Andy Dinniman (D-Chester). "The economic toll of repealing or weakening the Affordable Care Act would be significant. The human impact would be devastating. We must stand together to protect and support the ACA at the very time when Pennsylvanians need it the most."

Further, the safeguards and preparations that Pennsylvania has taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 could be negated if the ACA is repealed and emergency rooms are overrun again with visits for health care that could be easily taken care of in a primary care physician's office. A repeal would also cut off access to important preventative services by making this care unaffordable to vulnerable populations.

"As a local health center serving uninsured and underinsured patients in Chester County, LCH cannot overstate the importance of the ACA to thousands of families in this community," said Ted Trevorow, director of operations at La Comunidad Hispana. "Without access to affordable coverage, families can't receive the regular medical care they need to stay healthy, and are also vulnerable to financial ruin in the event of serious illness or injury. When health insurance is out of reach for so many low- and middle-income families, there can be no financial stability."

"We understand that the safety net that the Affordable Care Act ACA provides to Pennsylvania's families is critical. As a community-based organization, MCHC is certainly convinced of the necessity of the ACA," said Milena Oberti-Lanz, executive director of Maternal and Child Health Consortium. "Throughout our health insurance enrollment program and home visiting programs, we talk with parents every day about their children's and other family member's health needs. One of the reasons more children are covered is because their parents are now covered. One of the most effective strategies to reach eligible but uninsured children is for their parents to have coverage, which the ACA made possible for many Pennsylvanians. Adult coverage benefits children by having healthier parents and also supports families' financial security. More than ever before, we want to ensure individuals have coverage to prevent common illnesses, ensure access to preventive medical care, immunizations, and necessary medications."

MEDIA CONTACT: Lyndsay Kensinger, RA-GVGOVPRESS@pa.gov

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 555 Walnut St, 6th Floor Forum Place, Harrisburg, PA 17101 United States