

**Energy and Commerce Committee**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Health Chairwoman Anna G. Eshoo**

***Hearing on “Building on the ACA: Legislation to Expand Health Coverage and Lower Costs”***

**March 23, 2021**

Senator Edward Kennedy wrote a letter to President Obama to be opened after his death and in it he said that the cause of ensuring that “the state of a family’s health will never again depend on the amount of a family’s wealth” was the “great unfinished business of our society.”

When President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan earlier this month, he took another step toward that unfinished cause.

Covered California estimates that about 25 million Americans stand to benefit from the new and expanded subsidies to lower premium costs in the American Rescue Plan, including 3 million Californians.

For the millions of people who collected unemployment insurance at any time this year, they can now get covered by a health plan with a \$0 premium and added help to lower the cost of deductibles and co-payments.

After four years where millions of Americans who depended on the ACA lived in daily fear that they’d lose their health insurance because of a decision by the former President, I have good news: Your ACA coverage is safe and it’s a lot more affordable.

But the cause is still unfinished, especially in the 14 states that have not yet expanded Medicaid.

In those states, about 4.3 million Americans are locked out of health coverage despite being poor because their governors or state legislatures has so far refused to expand Medicaid.

Let’s take Texas for example. According to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, if you’re a parent in a family of three and make more than about \$3,700 per year, you’d make too much to be eligible for Medicaid.

If you’re an adult without kids in Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, Texas, or any of the other states that did not expand Medicaid yet, you’re ineligible for Medicaid even if you have no job or income. There isn’t any health care safety net for childless adults in those 14 states.

The American Rescue Plan offers those 14 states as much as \$22.7 billion dollars to correct this injustice. This federal support is in addition to the guarantee that the federal government will pay for 90% of the cost of expanding Medicaid to this new population.

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Beyond Medicaid expansion, unfinished business remains.

Today we'll consider 18 bills, many of them bipartisan, to increase enrollment, lower costs, and improve coverage, especially for children and people with disabilities.

To help us better understand how to finally achieve our North Star of universal health care, we'll also hear testimony from experts on Medicaid and private insurance, as well as from the patient and provider perspective. I look forward to each of your instructive testimonies.

Senator Ted Kennedy closed his letter to President Obama with the following: "What we face is above all a moral issue; that at stake are not just the details of policy, but fundamental principles of social justice and the character of our country."

Today, on the eleventh anniversary of the passage of the Affordable Care Act, let's consider the details of the policy before us, but let's also restore the character of our country through this important work as well.