



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0049-2010, **Version:** *

Res. No. 49

Resolution urging the United States Congress to approve a health care reform bill that will not restrict women's reproductive health or burden their right to choose by forcing women to seek alternative or supplemental insurance to obtain an abortion.

By Council Members Garodnick, Brewer, Chin, Dromm, Ferreras, Fidler, James, Koppell, Lander, Lappin, Mark-Viverito, Reyna and Rodriguez

Whereas, On November 7, 2009, the United States House of Representatives voted 220 to 215 to pass, H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act; and

Whereas, This legislation would accomplish many laudable goals including the provision of insurance for 96 percent of uninsured Americans; and

Whereas, This would be achieved by creating a public option for health insurance to increase competition and lower costs, offering insurance credits to assist individuals with affording and purchasing health insurance, and by prohibiting insurance companies from discriminating against those with preexisting conditions; and

Whereas, Before the vote on the final bill, the House voted 240 to 194 to approve an amendment put forward by Representative Bart Stupak (D-MI) which would prohibit federal funding for abortion services in the public option and would prohibit individuals who receive affordability credits from purchasing a plan that provides elective abortions; and

Whereas, According to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), a national reproductive health care advocate and provider, millions of women would lose access to benefits that they currently have and millions would be prohibited from getting the kind of private sector health care coverage that many women have today; and

Whereas, NARAL Pro-Choice America, a national advocacy organization for a woman's right to choose, states that currently more than 85 percent of private health insurance plans cover abortion services; and

Whereas, The Guttmacher Institute, a policy group devoted to advancing reproductive health worldwide, observed that in 2002, almost 87 percent of all employer-based health care plans covered surgical abortions; and

Whereas, While proponents of the Stupak Amendment claim that a woman would be able to purchase separate abortion-only coverage, the National Women's Law Center asserts that there is no evidence that abortion-only coverage exists, as there is no evidence of the availability of such coverage in the five states which allow abortion-only coverage through a separate rider; and

Whereas, Opponents of the Amendment are fearful that insurance companies will make a calculated decision to participate in the health insurance exchange, a regulated health insurance marketplace from which many of the currently uninsured individuals will choose to access health care, and thereby the insurance companies would be expressly prohibited from offering coverage for abortion services; and

Whereas, The Stupak Amendment would result in limiting the number of insurers that provide these services and thus, infringe upon a woman's ability to access reproductive health care; and

Whereas, Women already face major health disparities which are attributed to many causes including income disparities, affordability of insurance, the need for additional health services and gender biases; and

Whereas, Many leading women's health advocates are concerned that any health care reform which includes the Stupak Amendment language, will further expand gender health care disparities; and

Whereas, On December 24, 2009, the United States Senate passed their health care reform bill by a 60 to 39 margin; and

Whereas, The Senate version of the legislation requires that if an individual purchases an insurance option including abortion care, he or she must write two separate premium checks - one for the abortion care and the second for all other types of care; and

Whereas, Advocates are concerned that this has the same practical effect of an abortion rider and may result in insurance companies not offering insurance coverage for abortion, as the requirements to segregate funding may be burdensome and untenable; and

Whereas, The Senate bill also removes the requirement that at least one plan in each health insurance exchange provide abortion coverage; and

Whereas, The next step for this legislation is for the House and Senate bills to go to a Conference Committee, where the legislation will be further negotiated and reconciled; and

Whereas, Leading women's health organizations are calling for the Congress to pass meaningful health care reform which does not restrict a woman's constitutional and fundamental right to choose; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the United States Congress to approve a health care reform bill that will not restrict women's reproductive health or burden their right to choose by forcing women to seek alternative or supplemental insurance to obtain an abortion.

Res. No. 2288/2009

JM

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