

**Congressman Marsha Blackburn**  
**Opening Statement for Energy and**  
**Commerce**  
**Health Subcommittee**  
*As Prepared For Delivery*  
**“Health Care Choice Act”**  
**May 25, 2011**

MEDIA CONTACT: Claude Chafin  
[claude.chafin@mail.house.gov](mailto:claude.chafin@mail.house.gov) 202-225-1112

I'd like to especially thank you, Chairman Pitts and Chairman Upton, for holding this hearing today to discuss what I believe is an extremely innovative and important bill.

Nearly 51 million Americans lack health insurance. 85% of uninsured workers cite unaffordability as the top reason for why they are uninsured. We can do something to help. The Health Care Choice Act-which is only 31 pages long- will harness market forces to lower the cost of health insurance, and reduce the number of uninsured Americans by 12 million without any cost to the federal government.

In 1965, there were only seven state benefit mandates. Today, there are over 2,100 mandates on health insurance coverage. These mandates have increased health insurance premiums between 10-50% for American families.

For example, in high mandate states like NY and Massachusetts the average family premium is just over \$13,000. Right across the river in a lower mandate state like Pennsylvania, the average cost is just above \$6,000 which is about the same as in my home state of TN.

This bill would give consumers the option of buying health insurance that meets their needs and is right for them – even if that means buying a policy that is qualified in another state. While I may prefer a plan that includes a chiropractor that choice isn't going to be right for everyone.

As Speaker Hastert used to say, “We shouldn't be forcing people to buy a Cadillac when all they need is a Chevy.” This bill will lower health insurance costs across the country by cutting red tape – insurance plans won't have to go through 50 different certification processes.

The Health Care Choice Act will result in significant cost savings. And it is important to note that this bill will not decrease consumer protection or act as a “race to the bottom.” As I told President Obama, this bill will “let the people out” and finally give them the freedom of choice to meet their individual and family health coverage needs.

Additionally, not only will the primary state be able to enforce all its laws, the secondary state may, for instance:

- assess premium and other taxes (including high-risk pool assessments);
- conduct a financial review of the insurer if the primary state has not;
- seek an injunction alleging the insurer is in hazardous financial condition;
- require participation in the secondary state’s guaranty funds;
- require compliance with the secondary state’s fraud and abuse laws;
- require compliance with the secondary state’s unfair claims settlement practice laws;
- require that all insurance brokers or agents be licensed in that state; and
- stop the sale of insurance to groups or individuals not permitted or by an insurer in

hazardous financial condition.

I believe that this bill strikes the appropriate balance between maintaining state regulation, while increasing consumer's access to affordable coverage that meets their needs.

I'm a strong believer in this legislation. It won't solve every problem facing our health care industry but it's a good start and I look forward to this opportunity to discuss it. Thank you.