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How the Republican health care plan could impact Alabama

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MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - With Russia roaring back into the headlines, the White House would rather be talking about its victory in the House on health care, but there's growing scrutiny over details in the plan related to pre-existing conditions and cuts to Medicaid.

Alabama officials say within the next week we can expect a report from the Congressional Budget Office on this new health care plan, and Alabama ARISE says we can expect similar figures to the American Health Care Act, with an estimated 24 million losing coverage.

Roby is vowing to do all she can to get the House's health care bill passed.

"This is the first step in a three-step process to help drive down costs, increase access to health care that is more patient centered and based on these free market principals," Roby said.

But Jim Carnes, the policy director at Alabama ARISE, says the House plan is bad news for Alabama.

"The bill would take \$840 billion out of the total Medicaid program nationwide over the first 10 years, and Alabama would be hit especially hard with that," Carnes said.

According to Carnes, the bill would allow states the option of waiving essential health benefits that were guaranteed by the Affordable Care Act.

"The idea of giving Alabama the freedom to opt out of making insurance companies cover maternity care or emergency care or mental health services is a really scary prospect because Alabama's track record is not good," Carnes said.

The Senate showdown over health care reform is shifting into high gear with 13 Republicans starting from scratch.

"Republicans in the House and in the Senate and the White House are united and we are working to get things done," Roby said.

The discussion over pre-existing conditions continues to take center stage.

"This bill would allow insurance companies to take health status into account when they set premiums," Carnes said.

According to NBC News, those with pre-existing conditions who don't maintain continuous coverage could pay more with states allowed to "opt out" of covering them, although the bill does provide an additional \$8 billion over five years to lower some costs.

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