

**PROTECT
OUR CARE**

**Written Testimony of
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before the
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives

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Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Brad Woodhouse, and I'm the President of Protect Our Care. Our mission is to make high-quality, affordable health care a right, and not a privilege for everyone in America. I'm here today because that mission is under direct threat.

By passing H.R. 1, President Trump and Congress delivered the [largest cuts to health care](#) in American history, all to fund [tax breaks](#) for billionaires and big corporations. They slashed over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which will rip lifesaving coverage from [15 million](#) Americans, including seniors, children, and people with disabilities.

Already, nearly [four million](#) people have lost their health care coverage. Costs are skyrocketing for millions more, and patients are making impossible choices between paying for groceries and seeing a doctor. Small businesses are shutting down and families are being left with nowhere to turn. The ripple effect of these cuts have catapulted health care as the number one issue in America. A recent Gallup Poll [showed](#) that "the availability and affordability of health care" topped the chart of American worries about key issues, ranking higher than the economy and inflation.

Following the passage of H.R. 1, Protect Our Care launched [Hospital Crisis Watch](#), an interactive map tracking hospitals, nursing homes, and other types of care facilities that have shut down or are at risk of shutting down or cutting services due to these devastating funding cuts. This project has already reached the grim milestone of over [800](#) hospitals or health facilities that have closed, announced cuts, or are at high risk.

When hospitals close, patients have to travel further for care, families face longer wait times in overwhelmed emergency rooms, expectant moms are left without accessible maternity care, and costs go up for everyone. As the sixth largest employer in the country, hospitals are key economic drivers, especially in rural areas. But because of Congress, nearly [500,000](#) health care workers could lose their jobs. Entire communities will be left without access to care while CEOs and billionaires get even richer. As our interactive map and report show, the consequences of H.R. 1 are already playing out, and things will only get worse in the years to come.

H.R. 1: Increased Costs and Millions More Americans Without Insurance

No matter where they live or work, or who they voted for, the American people want health care to be more affordable and accessible. However, H.R. 1 is sweeping across our country ripping care away from millions and forcing people to pay more for less. These unprecedented cuts to health care:

- Cut funding for Medicaid and the ACA by [over \\$1 trillion](#) to pay for tax breaks for [millionaires](#) and [corporations](#).

- Will rip health care away from [15 million Americans](#), including [seniors](#), [children](#), [veterans](#), and [people with disabilities](#).
- Doubled and tripled premiums for over [20 million](#) hardworking Americans, including [small business owners](#), [farmers](#), and [older adults](#).
- Generated billions in tax breaks for the rich by choking seniors and working families in red tape and making it harder to enroll in [Medicare](#), [Medicaid](#), and [ACA coverage](#).
- Led to over [800](#) hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes shutting down, cutting services, or being at risk of closure and cuts
- Robbed [11 million](#) low-income Americans of zero-dollar premiums.
- Funneled [millions](#) of families into [reduced](#) coverage that will force them to pay thousands more each year in health care costs.
- Pressured countless families to [cut back](#) on food, clothing, and other basics to afford health insurance and greater out-of-pocket costs.

In the same bill, Congress doled out [\\$730 billion](#) in tax breaks to corporations and [\\$890 billion](#) in tax breaks to millionaires.

In recent hearings, administration officials twisted numbers from Congressional Budget Office (CBO) data to assert that there have been no cuts to Medicaid. Not only is that assertion plainly [false](#) but it conveniently leaves out details from the [same projections](#) that provide clear evidence of the damage of the health care cuts. To begin, CBO estimated [7 million](#) Americans will lose Medicaid coverage by 2032. In addition, CBO estimated [11.2 million](#) Americans or half the Americans who rely on ACA tax credits, will lose their tax credits completely by 2028. Between the cuts to Medicaid and the cuts to the ACA, CBO projected the number of Americans who are uninsured will skyrocket to 35.3 million, or [increase by a third](#), by the end of the Trump administration.

Administration officials and lawmakers also claim the only Americans losing their health care are illegal. From our line of work, we know that is categorically false. Our teams are on the ground in 14 states working alongside blue collar Americans who have lost their health care, in order to make their stories heard. Over the past year, we've heard from [farmers in Iowa](#), [small business owners in Virginia](#), and [caregivers in Michigan](#) who have all had their health care jeopardized by the decisions of Congress and this administration. We have collected over 300 [stories](#) of working Americans who are losing their health care or making sacrifices to pay the arm and leg it now costs for their health care. Today, I'd like to share the stories of two of them: Teresa Acosta of Atlanta, Georgia and Lester Johnson of Richmond, Virginia.

Teresa Acosta is a single mother in Atlanta, Georgia. After Congress allowed the enhanced premium tax credits to expire in favor of giving tax breaks to the wealthy, Teresa's premium skyrocketed six fold. She closed her small business in order to afford her health care and her first insurance bill still left her with [\\$74](#) in her bank account just weeks before Christmas. Her daughter is now taking a break from college to help Teresa pay the bills.

Lester Johnson is a dad and small business owner in Virginia. After Congress eliminated the enhanced premium tax credits, Lester's premium doubled. Now, Lester worries about keeping his business open and keeping his 40 employees on the payroll. Teresa and Lester are not alone. Every day, millions of families are being forced to make brutal decisions to afford their health care costs:

- [37 percent](#) of Americans with Marketplace coverage are cutting back on food, clothing, or other basic household items
- [13 percent](#) are skipping or delaying paying other bills
- [30 percent](#) were forced to switch plans, many to reduced coverage with higher out-of-pocket costs
- [30 percent](#) say their health care costs are making it difficult to afford their rent or mortgage

Even with their sacrifices, recent data shows that [one in seven](#) people who renewed their coverage could not afford their first premium payment.

These policies aren't "America First." When people lose their health care, it doesn't just hurt their families, it hurts their community. Massive losses in coverage result in loss of revenue for hospitals and clinics that affect their ability to keep their doors open. H.R. 1's incoming cuts to provider taxes and state-directed payments only compound the issue, making it harder for rural hospitals, primary care clinics, and maternity wards to survive.

H.R. 1: Hundreds of Hospitals and Clinics Across the Country In Danger

The health care cuts passed by Congress are putting the entire health care system on life support. H.R. 1 cut nearly a trillion dollars from Medicaid, including an estimated [half a trillion](#) dollars from hospitals. Medicaid accounts for [one-fifth](#) of spending on hospitals, [one-fifth](#) of hospital discharges, and at least [one in five](#) inpatient days in nearly every state. Medicaid is also the largest payor of [maternal health](#), [mental health](#), and [nursing home care](#) in the country. Since H.R. 1's passage, over [800](#) hospitals, nursing homes, maternity wards, and other critical providers nationwide have shuttered, cut services, or are at risk of doing so. Every hospital or clinic that closes its doors puts patients' lives at risk, strips communities of vital services, and forces families to make impossible choices just to access the care they need – all so Congress can make the rich richer. Across America, health care is vanishing, and millions of Americans are left with rising costs, longer journeys to care, and, in far too many cases, no care at all. With Protect Our Care's Hospital Crisis Watch, we've been exposing the full scale of harm H.R. 1 is inflicting on America's health care system—community by community, hospital by hospital. So far we have tracked:

- Over [800](#) hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes that have shut down, cut services, or are at risk of doing so since Congress passed the largest cuts to health care in history.
- [Multiple hospitals](#) that have converted to standalone emergency departments and [over a dozen](#) hospitals have fully shut down.
- Nearly [60](#) hospital wards have shuttered including nearly [30](#) maternity wards.
- Over [240](#) clinics that have been forced to close.

- And over [400](#) hospitals remain at deep risk of closure or cuts

The cuts to health care are affecting everyone, everywhere, regardless of where they get their coverage. When hospitals or emergency departments close, emergency cases are [diverted](#) to other hospitals, leading to longer travel times for ambulances, overcrowding in emergency rooms, and longer waits to see a doctor. Studies find that ambulance transport times increase by [11 to 16 minutes](#) following a rural hospital closure — a life or death difference for patients having a stroke, heart attack, or internal bleeding. Costs will also spike for everyone as hospitals [close](#), driving up costs at nearby facilities by an estimated [\\$500](#) per hospital stay. Everyone will pay the price because Congress put tax breaks for billionaires and big corporations above the needs of working people.

Here are just a few stories illustrating the impact of cuts and closures that have occurred since H.R. 1 passed: In Jersey City, New Jersey, a hospital that had supported the community for [over 150 years](#) shuttered under the pressure of Medicaid cuts, leaving a city of nearly 300,000 with only one emergency room. In rural Farmville, Virginia, moms are [driving an hour or more](#) for prenatal appointments after their local maternity ward closed. In Santa Rosa, California, families with sick children will need to [fly by helicopter](#) to Bay area hospitals to get pediatric care they need after a ward at their local hospital closed.

In Nebraska's 3rd Congressional district, a nursing home, a [primary care clinic](#), and a [critical dialysis unit](#) were all forced to shutter and [five](#) hospitals remain at risk of cuts or closure. A rancher from Hay Springs is now spending nine hours each week driving to and from Scottsbluff for his dialysis.

In Missouri's 8th Congressional district, a [local maternity ward](#) was forced to close and another hospital was forced to close entirely. Two remaining hospitals in the district are at [risk of closure or cuts](#).

In West Virginia's 1st Congressional district, pregnant women are driving [nearly two hours](#) to Charleston to give birth after the closure of the maternity ward. Children with psychiatric issues are left with few options for inpatient treatment after a [local facility](#) was boarded up. Five hospitals in the district remain [at risk of closure or cuts](#).

In New York's 24th Congressional district, [a dialysis clinic](#) was forced to close. Now patients are scrambling to find a new place to get lifesaving treatment. [Five hospitals](#) in the district are at risk of closure and cuts.

In Ohio's 7th Congressional district, [five clinics](#) were forced to close due to Medicaid cuts - leaving families with fewer options for care.

Protect Our Care has been crisscrossing America sounding the alarm on how these cuts are pushing hospitals to the brink, stripping care from communities, and putting lives at risk across the country. At one event in Michigan, the CEO of Hillsdale Hospital [said](#) "Cuts to Medicaid

translate directly to hospital closures, service disruptions and detrimental losses in our care system across rural America. Rural hospitals like Hillsdale Hospital rely on Medicaid because of our disproportionate payer mix, and when that source of basic reimbursement disappears, our patients are forced to choose between paying high Marketplace premiums or going without coverage entirely. That is not sustainable for rural communities or hospitals.” A former Alaska hospital CEO [said](#): “Cutting Medicaid in Alaska to the bare bones is a very bad idea—for population health, for women delivering babies, and for older folks.”

H.R. 1: Failing Rural Communities

H.R. 1 is a betrayal to rural communities. By gutting Medicaid, Congress gutted the health care [1 in 4](#) rural Americans rely on, while [raising premiums](#) for millions more – all to give tax breaks to [billionaires](#) and [corporations](#). More than [three million](#) rural Americans rely on the Affordable Care Act. Premium hikes hit them [28 percent](#) harder than urban residents. By gutting over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and the ACA, Congress also put over [330](#) rural hospitals at risk of closure and service cuts and [shuttered rural clinics](#) across the country. H.R. 1 is crumbling an already strained infrastructure, expanding maternity care deserts, and leaving Americans from [Iowa](#) to [Georgia](#) more than 45 minutes away from the care they need. Entire communities are finding themselves without care nearby. Local economies are suffering as health care jobs vanish. The so-called “rural health transformation fund” falls far short of what rural communities need, leaving families stranded without access to life-saving care.

The rural health fund is woefully underwhelming and nowhere near a solution. The grants will do little to nothing to help rural health care providers facing over [\\$130 billion](#) in cuts. The meager \$50 billion fund already failed to scratch the surface of the hundreds of billions in cuts to hospitals, before the Trump administration said no more than [15 percent](#) can be used to help rural health providers stay afloat. Meanwhile, administration officials are touting “[AI nurses](#)” as the solution. Policy experts at KFF [said](#) “It is highly unlikely that any state will receive more money from the rural health fund than it will lose from the historic cuts to federal funding for health care in the 2025 reconciliation law and from other federal policy changes.” The executive director of the Nebraska Rural Health Association [said](#) “rural health transformation will not save a single hospital in our state. I don’t think it will save a single hospital nationally.”

H.R. 1: Rural and Urban Hospitals Feeling the Pain

Though Congress has largely focused on H.R. 1’s impacts on rural communities, rural hospitals are not the only ones feeling the pain. According to a Harvard study, urban safety net hospitals make up [85 percent](#) of those at highest risk from cuts, yet H.R. 1 does not set aside a single penny for urban hospitals. In Los Angeles, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital is preparing to lose 15 to 20 percent of its revenue. In 2024, Medicaid paid for over [seven in ten](#) patients at MLK Jr. Community Hospital. “There aren’t enough things for us to cut to make up for that loss,” [said](#) Dr. Elaine Batchlor, M.L.K. 's chief executive.

In Long Island, New York, Nassau University Medical Center faces great [risk of cutting services or closing](#) in the face of the H.R. 1. In 2024, Medicaid paid for nearly [40 percent](#) of patients at Nassau University Medical Center. Without the maternity ward or ER at Nassau, patients would be forced to travel [30 minutes](#) to the nearest facility - critical time for a mom in labor or a senior with a stroke. These hospital closure risks are not colorblind either; around a fifth of all hospitals at risk of closure are within the five states where [42 percent](#) of Black Americans reside. Americans across all communities will pay the price for H.R. 1.

Communities are so desperate to save their local hospitals in the wake of H.R. 1 that counties from [California](#) to [Alabama](#) are instituting higher property taxes to fund infusions to stop their hospitals from closing. Countless hospitals still are [begging](#) for taxpayer-funded infusions from their state government to stay afloat because the so-called "Rural Health Transformation" fund doesn't do much to help. What we are seeing is only the beginning. Once millions begin to lose their health care due to paperwork designed to rip away their coverage and deep cuts to provider taxes and state-directed payments take effect in 2027 and 2028, the crisis will only worsen, leaving millions of Americans in the dust.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing today. Every day presents a chance to stop this health care crisis, but this administration has not lifted a finger to deliver relief to the American people. Congress should be focused on making health care affordable and accessible, not ripping it away to give tax breaks to the rich. I look forward to taking your questions and working with you to make that a reality for everyone in America.