

Rep. Bilirakis Calls for Halt to Possible Medicaid Cuts

WASHINGTON (16 Apr.) — U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) has co-sponsored legislation that would place a temporary moratorium on several Medicaid regulations that, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would result in nearly \$20 billion in cuts in federal funding to the program over the next five years.

The Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act of 2008 (H.R. 5613) extends until April 1, 2009, moratoria on seven Administration-imposed regulations that would shift large cost burdens on to cash-strapped state and local budgets, and could ultimately result in a significant scaling back of Medicaid services.

Despite a veto threat from the President, Congressman Bilirakis believes that both Congress and the President need to find a solution that does not affect states budgets or the Medicaid program so severely. Bilirakis is especially concerned about regulations that would prevent reimbursement for services provided for transporting Medicaid-eligible children to schools and limit reimbursements to safety-net hospitals.

"While I am extremely concerned about the runaway cost of entitlement spending and I understand the need to crack down on waste, fraud and abuse in the Medicaid program, this legislation simply puts a hold on regulation changes that would too dramatically affect Medicaid, while putting States in a position to pick up a tab that they simply will not be able to cover," said Bilirakis. "Congress needs to pass H.R. 5613 and then find a solution that addresses the impact these regulations will have on our states and communities."

Sponsored by Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), H.R. 5613 currently has 192 co-sponsors and is currently awaiting action by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.