

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

APRIL 1, 2017



Update on the American Health Care Act

Issue:

In late March, Affordable Care Act advocates enjoyed a bit of relief following the March 24 withdrawal of the American Healthcare Act in the House of Representatives, a sign, many thought, of the demise of Trump Administration plans to “repeal and replace Obamacare.”

Only days later, Kansas’ Republican-majority legislature seemed to agree as they sent a bill recommending the adoption of the Medicaid Expansion to the desk of Governor Sam Brownback, a longtime opponent. Whether Brownback will sign the measure is another question, but the action taken by Kansas legislators is just one sign of a larger pushback – in favor of the Medicaid Expansion – that’s now taking place in some of the 19 states that have yet to adopt this key provision of the Affordable Care Act. According to CNN, democratic governors in North Carolina and Virginia have renewed their calls for Medicaid Expansion, and citizens in Maine have gathered enough signatures to put an expansion proposal on the ballot in November. So, is the ACA really here to stay? The answer “yes” seemed certain on March 24, when Speaker Ryan said that the ACA was “the law of the land” and President Trump talked about the need for action on tax reform and infrastructure improvements. But then, on March 29, President Trump muddied the waters again, telling senators at the White House, “I know we’re going to make a deal on healthcare” and “I have no doubt that that’s going to happen very quickly.”

Whether or not proposals come forth “very quickly,” ACA and Medicaid advocates warn that the threat of major changes to health care policy are still very real. Among them is NACBHDD and NARMH Executive Director Ron Manderscheid, who stated on March 28 that “We haven’t seen the last of the American Health Care Act or of the debate about changing the ACA. It’s important that we all understand the big ideas in this legislation, because they’re going to keep coming back in one form or another.”

Analysis:

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