

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

February 16, 2021

**DISSENTING VIEWS ON SUBTITLE F.
BUDGET RECONCILIATION LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO
COTINUATION OF JOB-BASED COVERAGE**

Subtitle F of Budget Reconciliation Legislative Recommendations Relating to Continuation of Job-Based Coverage creates a new federal subsidy through September 30, 2021, equal to 85 percent of premium costs for those eligible workers who would enroll in health insurance coverage through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA).

The American economy is rebuilding. Unemployment has fallen steadily since the height of the pandemic in April – folks are getting back to work, and this nation is proving its resilience and strength. Given these circumstances, passing a multi-billion-dollar COBRA subsidy now doesn't make much sense. Alternative coverage options are available to Americans without this new spending: while everyone who loses their employer-sponsored insurance already gets a special enrollment period (SEP), the President has additionally reopened a broad healthcare.gov SEP—just weeks after the 2021 plan year open enrollment closed.

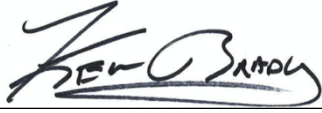
Moreover, this new subsidy would further increase the amount of taxpayer dollars subsidizing coverage that includes abortion, not restricted to circumstances other than rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother. A majority of Americans — nearly 60 percent — agree that taxpayer dollars should not fund abortion.³² A Republican amendment to add this common-sense Hyde Amendment language to subtitle F was rejected.

Instead of a new, deficit-increasing, multi-billion-dollar government subsidy program that lacks bipartisan Hyde Amendment protections, this Congress should be focused on defeating the virus, reopening schools, and incentivizing economic recovery and coverage through employer-sponsored insurance. That is the best and most effective use of taxpayer dollars, not a too-late subsidy for health insurance when patients who lose their job-based care already have coverage options at their disposal.

There are a number of ways Congress could have increased spending in a bipartisan way. Republicans would encourage Democrats to consider more targeted relief efforts, including increased vaccine outreach to rural and underserved communities and enhanced mental health and Substance Use Disorder treatment services.

Instead, the Democratic majority is insisting upon a partisan, one-sided process with no room for Republican input. This is not the bipartisan relief bill that the American people deserve.

³² <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/poll-strong-majority-of-americans-back-the-hyde-amendment/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KEVIN BRADY". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "K" and "B".

Kevin Brady
Republican Leader
Committee on Ways and Means