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Congresswoman Matsui Votes for More Choice in American Health Care System
Legislation Will Pave the Way for More Competition, Lower Costs

WASHINGTON, DC— Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-CA) voted in support of the Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act, introduced by Representatives Tom Perriello (D-VA) and Betsy Markey (D-CO). This legislation finally repeals the blanket anti-trust exemption afforded to health insurance companies by the McCarran-Ferguson Act of 1945. For decades, the health insurance industry has been able to avoid legal accountability for price fixing, market allocation, and bid rigging, all to the detriment of consumers. All of these practices are illegal for other industries in the United States. The result has been higher prices, lower quality of coverage, and limited choices for Americans looking to purchase health insurance for themselves and their families. This bill creates a fair health insurance marketplace and helps put our economy on sound footing for the future.

“In Sacramento, we are blessed with high-quality health care and a successful health care community,” Matsui said. “But we are not immune to some of the problems in today’s health insurance market, namely cost-prohibitive premiums and rising co-payments. These costs are sending many more families and seniors into bankruptcy. The Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act is the first step toward the kind of comprehensive health insurance reform that people in Sacramento and across the country need and deserve.”

Competition is the engine that drives our economy, spurs innovation, and ensures that consumers can purchase straightforward insurance plans. By eliminating the anti-trust exemption for health insurance companies, federal anti-trust enforcers will finally have the authority to investigate and protect consumers from possible collusion within the industry. The result will be more choices for Americans looking to purchase health insurance.

“Just this week, I heard from Anita Hazard, a 63-year-old constituent who is insured by Anthem Blue Cross, which means she is now subject to a 39 percent rate increase,” Congresswoman Matsui shared. “Anita would change her plan, but because she has a pre-existing condition and is elderly, it is very unlikely that she could secure coverage from another insurer. Anita’s story is one example of why we need health insurance reform that holds the insurance industry accountable, and the legislation passed by the House today will give the American people more choice in their health care by requiring health insurance companies to compete fairly and adhere to the same anti-trust laws as other companies.”

“This legislation is not a substitute for comprehensive health insurance reform, but is an important step forward. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the House of Representatives and the Senate in the coming weeks to deliver the strongest possible health insurance reform bill to the President, for the people of Sacramento.”

The Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act is supported by numerous groups including the American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America, Center for Justice and Democracy, and U.S. PIRG.

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