

Congresswoman Matsui Hosts Health Care Reform Discussion

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Washington, DC — As “Cover the Uninsured Week” begins, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) held a discussion on the increased momentum towards reforming our nation’s health care system. Joining the Congresswoman at the discussion was former senior Clinton White House health care advisor Chris Jennings. The dialogue focused on how to address the more than 46 million uninsured in this country, as well as ensuring this population doesn’t continue to grow.

“In addition to being morally unconscionable, a large uninsured population has real consequences for our nation’s health care system — in terms of hindering prevention, increasing costs, and making it more difficult to handle chronic care cases,” stated Congresswoman Matsui. “The warning bells signaling a growing health care crisis are ringing. As the elected leaders of this country, it seems only fair that we do just that — lead — in the face of a building crisis like this.”

Indicators of the growing pressure for reforming health care include the increasing interest of non-traditional constituencies, like big businesses, religious organizations, and some health plans. Increasingly, states, like Massachusetts and Illinois, are taking the lead in addressing the crisis.

Additionally, two studies were recently released that have sent up red flags about the health care system in this country. One by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation confirmed that individuals without insurance are only likely to seek treatment when they are seriously ill. And the other study, by the Commonwealth Fund, says that the uninsured population is only likely to grow, with middle-income individuals increasingly at risk for being uninsured for at least part of the year.

Congresswoman Matsui has cosponsored three bills that target three important segments of the country. Specifically targeted are the three fastest growing segments of the uninsured: low-income working parents, the nearly-elderly (people

between 55 and 64), and small business employees. Together, these bills could provide health insurance to over 23 million uninsured Americans.

“Ignoring the growing crisis means ignoring the dangerous impact on the middle class — our nation’s traditional economic engine. And it won’t make the challenges facing our health care system go away. It only means that more working Americans will worry what will happen to them and their families if illness or injury strikes. Ensuring quality affordable health care should be our nation’s highest priority and I will continue to advocate that Congress has the inevitable conversation about health care sooner rather than later.”

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