

March 19, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC-Rep. DeFazio (D-Springfield) released the following statement today about the health care reform legislation Congress is set to vote on this weekend:

"I voted for the original bill for three principal reasons: it had a public option which would get people out from under the thumb of the insurance industry; it had national exchanges which would give people lower rates and better coverage; and, after decades of trying, we finally fixed the Medicare geographic disparities formula which discriminates against Oregon and 16 other states. The most current version of the health care bill includes none of these provisions and unless we fix the geographic disparities, I cannot vote for this bill. We negotiated this change for months and we finally got an agreement included in the House bill and expected it to be in the final bill, but it has been removed.

"The formula has been unfair for 40 years and has only gotten worse in subsequent budget reconciliation bills. It is outdated and currently discriminates against Oregon and 16 other states that provide low cost, high quality care. Studies by MedPAC, the Institute of Medicine and the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy have all found the current formula inequitable and recommended that it be fixed but, it has not happened. The language in the House bill would have mandated the formula change. It does not cost three times as much to do an appendectomy in Florida as it does in Oregon but currently Medicare spends three times as much annually per an enrollee in Miami as in Eugene. The most calls I get the in my district offices are from seniors who cannot get a doctor because reimbursement rates are so low. This change would improve access to care for nearly 600,000 people in Oregon and millions of seniors across the country. Fixing the Medicare geographic disparities formula is only right and only fair. It is long past time for this to change."