

## [Advocates Urge Congress To Expand Health Care Access](#)

Days after President Donald Trump took credit for lowering prescription drug costs, Ohio groups blasted his administration and lawmakers for shrinking health care access for Ohioans.

During a Columbus press conference, representatives from Protect Our Care Ohio and several allied groups touted the organization's January report laying out the group's health care priorities for Congress.

Titled "The Health Care Congress: Cost, Coverage, Consumer Protections," [the paper](#) outlines several steps advocates argue would shore up health care options and lower treatment costs for residents of the Buckeye State. The group's report comes a day after [Gallup found](#) that the percentage of U.S. adults without health insurance increased 1.3 percentage points in the fourth quarter of 2017 compared to a year before, representing the largest single-year increase measured by the polling firm and Sharecare since they began tracking the rate in 2008.

"There are many things this Congress could be doing to improve care and lower costs," Protect Our Care spokeswoman Amanda Wurst said.

"Republicans in the Congress need to end their continued attack on the Affordable Care Act and join their Democratic colleagues in protecting our care."

The group and its allies – including For Our Future Ohio, UHCAN Ohio and ProgressOhio – recommend Congress and state-level policymakers:

- Work to overturn the U.S. Northern District of Texas decision that struck down the Affordable Care Act.
- Strengthen oversight of the Trump Administration's efforts to undermine the ACA and cease legislative efforts to undermine the law such as slashing outreach funding.

- Protect coverage for those with pre-existing conditions.
- Lower health care costs and expand financial assistance to those purchasing coverage in the individual market via legislation.
- Support Medicaid and Medicare by refraining from cost cuts and abandon efforts to create work requirements.

President Trump earlier in the week held a health care roundtable at the White House in which he applauded his administration for their work so far on the issue and outlined his continued commitment.

"My administration is committed to delivering a health care system that takes care of American people – of the American people, and like they haven't been taken care of before," Mr. Trump said. "And we can do that. It's a very difficult subject, it's a very complex subject, but we've all gotten to understand it very well. And the strides we've made are rather amazing."

President Trump credited his team's effort for reducing prescription drug prices during 2018 for the first time in over 50 years. He said he wants to boost transparency in health care pricing and eliminate surprise medical bills.

But Susan Hyde, a cancer survivor, criticized the Trump Administration continued effort to dismantle the ACA. Both she and her daughter, who suffered childhood leukemia, have preexisting conditions.

"President Trump has made it easier for discrimination to take place. His administration has refused to defend these protections in federal court," Ms. Hyde said. "I will continue to worry about my daughter's future until his administration acts to guarantee affordable coverage for all Americans." Columbus primary care physician Beth Weinstock said she serves many younger patients for whom the ACA's provision enabling them to remain on their parents' insurance until age 26 is critical.

And Steve Wagner, executive director UHCAN Ohio, said state level policymakers should also be on the hook for protecting health care access.

"We need to look at how this year, with a new governor, a new legislature, with many new members of Congress – how we can move past the fights we've had about health care and how we can improve access to the care so many people need," Mr. Wagner said. "That means abandoning these attempts of putting barriers on people in terms of seeking health care."