

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC, 20201

October 28, 2013

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

We write to express our concern regarding the impact of Obamacare on the availability and affordability of health-insurance plans in Arkansas. Before the law's implementation, state insurance officials claimed that there would be as many as eight carriers offering coverage in the individual market. However, a consumer logging on to the AR Health Connector website will find, at most, four plans offering coverage, while over 60% of the state will have no more than two provider options.

This is a disappointing, if unsurprising, failure of the reforms promised by Obamacare, which will mean decreased competition among plans, leading to higher costs, higher premiums, and less consumer choice.

Confirming the warnings of many skeptics, we are now seeing the detrimental impact of the flawed law on health-insurance rates across Arkansas. While the average Arkansas family has seen their income fall 9% over the past decade, the government regulations and mandates of Obamacare will require these same families to pay between 100% and 600% more for comparable insurance coverage, or risk losing their family doctor if they choose a plan that costs less.

This increase will decimate family budgets and, in many cases, force families to go without coverage. Experts warn this will lead to increased hospital visits for non-emergency issues, which would further exacerbate utilization and cost-pressure challenges the law purported to address.

While regrettable, the disastrous rollout of the Obamacare exchanges is somewhat fitting for the hastily passed law. But it's nonetheless unacceptable that the design and deployment of the exchange websites failed to meet even minimal expectations in an economy where Internet-based commerce is commonplace. Center for Consumer Information & Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) Director Gary Cohen failed to acknowledge and address these issues during his testimony in front of the Energy and Commerce Committee recently. While testifying, Director Cohen assured members that everything was "on track." As we now know, this was not the case.

We are more concerned that in just a few short months the law mandates that individuals purchase insurance; yet, the Healthcare.gov website can't deliver the means for them to do so, despite the Administration spending over \$400 million to develop the site. There are now reports that the online exchanges won't be functional in time for individuals to sign up for coverage beginning on January 1, 2014. This means hardworking Arkansans could be fined for not obtaining the coverage they are legally required to have, through no fault of their own.

The Administration is thus failing to meet constitutional requirements of fairness and equality before the law. Therefore, so that we can evaluate legislative solutions to address these issues, we request that you provide:


1. All correspondence between your office and the Arkansas Department of Insurance regarding the impact your regulations would have on the number of providers within the Arkansas insurance market.
2. All correspondence you provided to stakeholders in Arkansas regarding the status of the exchanges leading up to their launch on October 1, 2013.
3. The number of confirmed enrollments in Arkansas, as of Friday, October 25, 2013.

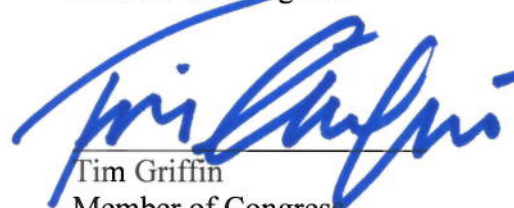
We look forward to reviewing the requested information and working with you to find solutions to the hardship Obamacare is inflicting on Arkansans. We appreciate that the Administration has put you in a very difficult position of implementing an unworkable law, so we thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this request. In the event you cannot provide this information by November 1, 2013, please immediately contact our offices.


Sincerely,


John Boozman
United States Senator


Tom Cotton
Member of Congress


Steve Womack
Member of Congress


Tim Griffin
Member of Congress


Rick Crawford
Member of Congress