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News

DeLauro, Murphy lead panel on women's health care in Middletown

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MIDDLETOWN — Congressmen Chris Murphy and Rosa DeLauro visited the city Thursday to explain the changes in health care in light of the implementation of Obamacare, also known as the Affordable Care Act, and what benefits will be available to women in particular.

Billed as a discussion on women's health care, DeLauro and Murphy led a panel of health care professionals including Teresa Younger, executive director of the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Dr. Kristen Zarfos, medical director of the Comprehensive Breast Health Center at Saint Francis Medical Group, and Margaret Flinter, senior vice president and clinical director of Community Health Center.

The congressmen and panel members made their remarks at the Cross Street Zion Church Thursday to about 20 people.

DeLauro said the act puts women's health coverage "on equal footing" with coverage for men.

"The Affordable Health Act puts an end to gender rating. Women pay on average 48 percent more than men," she said.

DeLauro said under the current system, four out of five women do not have maternity coverage, and if a woman has a pre-existing condition, she pays more.

One in five women, she said, have not had mammograms in the last two years, because of cost.

She said the act will also cover preventative and wellness care, which she said will save money.

"Many of these services will be free of charge," she said.

Before yielding the podium to Murphy, DeLauro cautioned the crowd that "the gains made" in the legislation will be lost if Republicans win majorities in November.

"All of this is at risk even though the Supreme Court of the United States ruled it was Constitutional."

DeLauro said the majority in the House of Representatives "are committed to repealing" the act.

"Instead of repeal, we need to improve it, make it stronger, make sure women's health needs are addressed," she said.

Murphy also warned of the potential of a repeal.

"A group of radicals in Washington want to bring women's health care back to the stone age, and that's what's happening today... Women are paying 40 percent more simply because of gender. That ends with this bill," he said.

Murphy said he has become "uncomfortable" that Offices of Womens Health Care, which were a part of all health agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration and Center for Disease Control, were not written into law.

He said because the offices were not law, any administration can come in and decide to end Offices of Women's Health Care.

"As you certainly know, as the Republican Party gets more radicalized, the Romney administration probably has no interest in continuing them," he said.

Murphy told the audience that he and Mayor Dan Drew walked Main Street earlier that day and visited local businesses. He said the majority of businesses they visited had women running them.

"Health care is an obstacle for them and their employees. Health care will be fundamentally more affordable to small business with purchasing pools," he said.

Younger said the ACA will allow women the freedom to make decisions in their best interest.

"For women who don't work full time or don't have coverage, their expenses are higher than most, and more declare bankruptcy," Younger said.

She said the ACA will also afford women to take time off from work to care for a family member who needs care.

Zoros said health care decisions should be between a doctor and a patient, and "not an insurance agent."

She said women have to learn not only about the legislation, but preventative care.

"A half-million women will die of a heart attack this year, and it can be prevented Tobacco use, obesity, diet are all factors.

"We need to educate women," she said.

Flinter spoke of the importance of educating women about health exchanges.

"When you go to an exchange, you can find out if you qualify for Medicaid, and if not, we can direct you where to get coverage... I think it's a majestic piece of legislation. I would have liked the public option," she said.

Flinter also expressed a concern about lack of coverage for illegal aliens.

"I have concern and compassion for people who still won't be covered," she said.

U.S. Senate nominee Linda McMahon, who will challenge Murphy for the Senate seat to be vacated by Sen. Joe

Lieberman, released a statement regarding the ACA.

“The majority of Americans oppose the president’s health care plan because it raises taxes on small businesses, cuts Medicare by \$500 billion and increases costs,” she said in her statement. “I opposed it because Connecticut small business owners have told me about the negative impact it has had on their ability to create jobs. But now the real work begins, and that’s why it is so important for Connecticut voters to send someone to Washington who will implement common-sense, market-based solutions that increase patient choice, control costs, and expand access to coverage for all Americans.”

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