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SCHWARTZ DENOUNCES GOV. CORBETT'S FAILURE TO ACT ON HEALTH CARE COVERAGE EXPANSION IN STATE BUDGET

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz (PA-13) expressed strong disappointment after Pennsylvania Governor Corbett released a budget today that does not demonstrate plans to move forward with expansion of Medicaid coverage to 500,000 low-income, working Pennsylvanians. Although the Governor left open the possibility of moving forward with the Medicaid expansion, today's Budget release demonstrated a lack of willingness to seriously engage on this issue.

As one of the nation's leading health care policy experts, Rep. Schwartz had a significant role in drafting the Affordable Care Act to ensure that it improved access to quality, affordable coverage for all Americans through public-private partnerships and efforts where states could have significant roles in expanding access.

"Budgets are statements of priorities, and it is clear by today's budget that Governor Corbett's priorities are simply not aligned with middle-class Pennsylvania families. Walking away from reducing Pennsylvania's uninsured population by 41 percent is short-sighted and fiscally irresponsible," Schwartz said.

Each year in Pennsylvania, uninsured patients receive nearly \$1 billion in uncompensated medical care. Without coverage, their care is delayed, their conditions become more severe, and they turn to emergency rooms, where care is more expensive and the cost is ultimately borne by the taxpayers.

The Governor has - to date - rejected additional federal funds to support an expansion of the state's Medicaid program to cover 500,000 of these individuals and families who make too much to qualify for Medical Assistance under current state law and too little to purchase private insurance.

Under the Affordable Care Act, the federal government would provide the greatest share of costs in the short and long term to dramatically expand access to coverage for these hard-working citizens.

"Medical Assistance makes up more than 50 percent of the state's budget and we need to ensure these dollars are spent wisely," Schwartz said. "Improving access to primary care, preventive care, and disease management through expanded Medicaid coverage would increase the overall health status of the citizens of our state. This will drive down costs associated with preventable diseases and unnecessary hospitalizations."

While there is no formal deadline for states to participate in the Medicaid expansion, 19 states and the District of Columbia have already announced their intent to move forward in 2014. Yesterday, Ohio Governor John Kasich became the fifth Republican governor to opt in.

"This was a missed opportunity, but it is not our last opportunity. The Obama administration stands ready to provide the financial and administrative support our state needs to carry out its responsibilities to the people of Pennsylvania," Schwartz said.