

Expanding Health Care Options for Early Retirees Act

Section-by-Section Summary

Section 1: Short Title

This Act shall be known as the Expanding Health Care Options for Early Retirees Act.

Section 2: Medicare Buy-In at 50 Option for First Responders

Provides an option for qualified first responders to buy-in to Medicare (Part A, B, and D benefits or an MA-PD plan). Qualified first responder is defined as a first responder (firefighter, police, or EMT as defined in US code) between the ages of 50-64 who has been separated from service as the result of retirement or disability.

Instructs the Secretary of HHS, in coordination with existing ACA and Medicare open enrollment periods, to establish enrollment and coverage periods for individuals eligible for coverage under this legislation. The first open enrollment period shall exist a year after date of enactment.

Directs the Secretary of HHS to determine monthly premiums for individuals enrolled under this provision by estimating the average, annual per capita amount for benefits and administrative expenses for all estimated enrollees under this section and dividing it by 12. Premiums shall be deposited into the Medicare Trust Funds.

Clarifies that coverage under this section shall be considered minimal essential coverage, as specified by the Affordable Care Act.

Individuals eligible for coverage under this legislation shall not be eligible for Medicare cost sharing assistance, but shall be eligible for tax credits as provided under the ACA. Premium assistance (in the form of tax credits and cost sharing subsidies) shall be calculated based on the individual's income and benchmarked against the lowest cost silver plan as offered on the exchange. Individuals will also be able to utilize defined contributions from retiree plans to help purchase coverage under this provision.

Prohibits states from buying Medicaid-eligible individuals into this buy-in program. Provides for guaranteed-issue Medigap policies for those 50-64 to ensure all individuals eligible for Medicare coverage under this provision are also eligible to sign up for Medigap supplemental insurance policies to help manage out-of-pocket costs.

Instructs the Secretary of HHS to establish a "Medicare Buy-In Oversight Board" to monitor and oversee the implementation of this section, including the experience of individuals purchasing coverage under this section. Requires any advisory board to include representatives from industry, consumer advocates, and individuals who represent the first responder community.

Specifies outreach and enrollment activities that shall take place to raise awareness about this section, premium assistance available for individuals under this section, and carry out enrollment activities for individuals eligible for coverage under this section. The federal government shall provide such sums as necessary for states, nonprofit organizations, and nonprofit first responder organizations to engage in education and outreach activities. Prohibits funding from going to for-profit insurance companies and brokers. Funding shall be prioritized in areas at risk of having no qualified health plans in the individual market.

Clarifies that the Medicare Buy-In program shall have no negative impact on the existing Medicare program, beneficiaries, or trust fund.

Requires the Secretary to consult with stakeholders – including beneficiary advocates, health care providers, employers, and organizations representing first responders – in promulgating regulations around the Buy-In program.