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**Sen. Smith Introduces Bill to Make Eventual COVID-19 Vaccine Free**  
*Legislation Waives Cost-Sharing for Everyone, Regardless of Insurance Status*

WASHINGTON, D.C. [08/11/20]—Sen. Smith announced that she's introduced legislation that would make the eventual coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine free to everyone, regardless of insurance status. The bill, called the *Free COVID-19 Treatment Act*, would also waive any cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment to anyone, regardless of how an individual gets health insurance, or whether they have insurance at all.

Sen. Smith says that more than 5.4 million Americans lost their health insurance between February and May, representing the highest annual percentage increase in the number of uninsured people in American history, largely driven by pandemic related job losses. On top of financial insecurity, newly uninsured and unemployed Americans also face uncertainty regarding the cost of their COVID-19 treatment. This uncertainty disproportionately impacts communities of color.

**"Whenever a vaccine is developed—and I hope it is soon—everyone in this country should be able to get it, free of charge, regardless of insurance status,"** said Sen. Smith. **"My bill, the *COVID-19 Treatment Coverage Act* will help protect Americans from COVID-19 expenses so that they can get the care they need without worrying about how they are going to afford it."**

**"Young Invincibles is proud to endorse the COVID-19 Treatment Coverage Act which would provide crucial protection from high-cost sharing for COVID treatment, and help uninsured young people get covered through a federal special enrollment period and incentivizing Medicaid expansion in the states. Young people are less likely to have the net savings to afford high-cost care and may avoid seeking treatment if they fear unaffordable medical bills will follow. We must ensure that everyone can get the care they need, and we fully support Senator Smith's efforts to make that possible."** — Erin Hemlin, Director of Health Policy & Advocacy, Young Invincibles

Senator Smith's *COVID-19 Treatment Coverage Act*, which includes provisions from the House-passed *HEROES Act*, would protect Americans from COVID-19 expenses by:

- Requiring Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover and prohibit cost sharing on COVID-19 treatment and a future COVID-19 vaccine;
- Providing States with the option and financial incentive to expand Medicaid in order to cover the cost of COVID-19 treatment and a future COVID-19 vaccine for the uninsured;
- Requiring Medicare and Medicare Advantage to cover COVID-19 treatment services without cost sharing, prior authorization, or other utilization management;

- Ensuring Medicare Prescription Drug Plans and Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Plans eliminate cost sharing for COVID-19 drugs and prohibit prior authorization or other utilization management protocols for these treatments;
- Prohibiting commercial insurers from imposing cost sharing for medically necessary items and services—including in-person or telehealth visits—to treat COVID-19;
- Prohibiting copayments and cost sharing for TRICARE beneficiaries, veterans, federal civilian employees, and recipients of Indian Health Service (IHS) services receiving COVID-19 treatment;
- Immediately establishing a special enrollment period for the federal insurance marketplace and appropriating \$25 million for outreach and enrollment in health insurance coverage; and
- Expressing the sense of Congress that no individual should receive a surprise medical bill for COVID-19 treatment.

The *COVID-19 Treatment Coverage Act* is endorsed by: Families USA, Young Invincibles, National Indian Health Board, Lutheran Services in America-Disability Network, American Association on Health and Disability, Lakeshore Foundation, National Hispanic Medical Association, Susan G. Komen Foundation, United Spinal Association, Brain Injury Association of America, Epilepsy Foundation, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Health Council, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, American Public Health Association, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, Families Fighting Flu, Immunization Action Coalition, Infectious Diseases Society of America, March of Dimes, National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, Seqirus, STChealth LLC, The AIDS Institute, The Gerontological Society of America, Vaccinate Your Family, WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease.

This legislation is cosponsored by Sens. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Michael Bennet (D-Colo.).

You can read a summary of the bill [here](#).