

MITCH MCCONNELL
KENTUCKY



United States Senate

MAJORITY LEADER

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

August 19, 2016

Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

I write to express my surprise at published news reports indicating that the Administration is planning a new advertising campaign to promote Obamacare's exchanges. I am interested in knowing what resources the Administration believes it has for such a campaign and why it believes that such funds would be better spent propping up the failed Obamacare exchanges than other important public health priorities - such as preventing the spread of Zika.

Nearly every day brings another set of stories about the dysfunction of the Obamacare exchanges and the negative impact on consumers. For years, the public has read story after story warning of double-digit premium increases in nearly every corner of the country. More recently, we have learned of that Obamacare's onerous rules and poor implementation have caused a number of insurers to withdraw their participation from the exchanges, leading to fewer choices in for consumers in the marketplace. Given these trends, it comes as no surprise that enrollment is well below the projections for this point.

As the program continues to falter, now we see reports that the administration is working on yet another Obamacare advertising campaign, despite warnings that it will do little to change the fundamental weaknesses in the market place. I am particularly concerned that taxpayer resources could be used for these campaigns at a time when there are higher priority public health needs.

With this in mind, I would like timely answers to the following questions.

- 1.) Is there a planned advertising campaign regarding the Obamacare exchanges?
- 2.) How many taxpayer dollars does the Administration seek to spend on an Obamacare advertising campaign?
- 3.) Did the Administration request funding for this Obamacare advertising campaign in their FY 2016 or FY 2017 budget?
- 4.) What funds have been appropriated to conduct such a campaign in FY 2016 and FY 2017?

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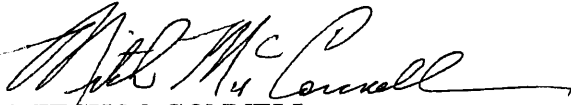
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- 5.) Has the Administration identified an alternative source of funding this Obamacare advertising campaign?
- 6.) If the Administration has identified alternative sources of funding for this Obamacare advertising campaign, wouldn't those funds be better allocated to other public health priorities, such as Zika prevention, response, and treatment activities?
- 7.) In earlier years, the Administration spent millions of dollars in taxpayer funds through exchanges on ads of questionable value. Yet those advertising campaigns failed to attract enough young and healthy enrollees to create a sustainable marketplace. Do you expect this campaign to yield a different result?

Advertising is helpful when you have a good product to sell that people don't fully understand. Obamacare's problem isn't that it is poorly understood, but rather that people understand all too well that the law costs too much and it isn't working like the Administration promised.

I look forward to a timely response to these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch McConnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MITCH McCONNELL
SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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