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CONTACT: Susan Sullam, 410-962-4436

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## ***CARDIN JOINS ROCKEFELLER IN INTRODUCING BILL TO ALLOW INDIVIDUALS BETWEEN 55 AND 64 TO BUY INTO THE MEDICARE PROGRAM***

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator **Benjamin L. Cardin** (D-MD) has joined with U.S. Senator **Jay Rockefeller** (D-WV) in introducing the *Medicare Early Access Act*, S. 3710, which would allow individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 to buy into the Medicare program. Medicare is the federal health insurance program for Americans age 65 and older and for the disabled.

It is estimated that approximately 5.1 million Americans between the ages of 55 and 64 do not have health insurance. The number of Americans under age 65 who lack health insurance has increased over the years due to the recession and as more companies drop retiree health care coverage. This bill would make it possible for many of them to secure reasonably priced health care coverage with guaranteed benefits through the government.

*“We are the richest nation in the world, yet more than 47 million of our citizens lack health coverage. The rising number of uninsured Americans affects all of us, so we have a responsibility to act for the health of our citizens and the health of our economy,” said Senator Cardin, a member of the Senate Budget Committee. “The Medicare Early Access Act, which will help many of those caught in limbo between retirement and Medicare, is an important step forward on our current path toward a universal, affordable, quality health care system that protects employer-based coverage and expands public options.”*

*“People between ages 55 and 65 are the fastest growing group of uninsured Americans. These individuals often have a difficult time buying health insurance on their own because they tend to have more chronic health problems that can result in either the denial of coverage, limited coverage, or very expensive policies,” said Senator Rockefeller, Chairman of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health Care. “This legislation helps a vulnerable segment of our population who need access to affordable health insurance.”*

The expansion of Medicare to older Americans would be financed by monthly premiums paid for by individuals. The bill also includes a 75 percent refundable federal tax credit to make it easier for older Americans to pay the premiums.

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