

As Congress debates reforming Medicare, Rep. Peter Welch visited a physician's practice in Montpelier Tuesday morning to announce his plans to expand the use of Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) to control health care costs and improve health outcomes. As a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, the powerful House committee with jurisdiction over federal health care policy, Welch will have a seat at the table for the Medicare debate.

"We can put Medicare on a sustainable path without slashing benefits to seniors. As usual, Vermont is leading the way. Accountable care organizations like Vermont's 'OneCare Vermont' are transforming the Medicare payment system by rewarding providers for improvements in a patient's health rather than the number of procedures they perform. It is a common sense approach that we should expand nationwide," Welch said.

ACOs are a collaborative of health care providers working together to improve the quality and efficiency of care, rather than increase the volume and intensity of services. By creating financial incentives to provide better, more cost-effective care, ACOs help drive down health care costs and improve patient health outcomes.

Welch was the author of the provision in the new health care reform law that authorized the pilot ACO program being pursued by Vermont health care providers. Nationwide, ACOs are expected to save \$1.1 billion over the next five years, according to the Department of Health and Human Service.

The visit in Montpelier marks the second stop of Welch's statewide Energy and Commerce Committee tour where he is highlighting legislative priorities he will pursue as a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Welch was a member of the Committee during the 111th Congress when major health care reform was enacted. He is returning to the committee in the 113th Congress which opened last week.