

Senator's remarks at health care forum

CHARLESTON — Following a meeting with West Virginia families, Senator Jay Rockefeller today, August 11, delivered remarks at the University of Charleston and held a question and answer dialogue on proposals for fixing a broken health care system. West Virginia AARP, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care and the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy jointly invited Senator Rockefeller to speak to the crowd of over 200 West Virginians.

In his keynote remarks, Senator Rockefeller spoke about working West Virginia families who are struggling in the current health care system. He highlighted the story of Rich and Amy Bord, local teachers from Fairmont, whose son has been diagnosed with leukemia. The Bords told their story publicly at today's roundtable with West Virginia families, sharing their experience out of a desire to prevent other families from the same struggles.

"It is these stories, the unbelievable pain behind them, and the battle of so many West Virginians that drive me to fight for real health reform every single day," said Senator Rockefeller in his speech. Senator Rockefeller focused on the need to level the playing field for West Virginia families so that they have stable, affordable health care choices and they can't get cut off by insurance companies when they are sick.

Excerpts from Senator Rockefeller's speech:

"We all know far too many people who have heartbreaking stories about terrible struggles in our health care system. But I want to tell you just one more today. It is about Rich and Amy Bord of Fairmont. Rich and Amy are local teachers. They work hard to make ends meet, and they have health insurance. Let me repeat that – they have health insurance.

"Rich and Amy's nine-year-old son, Samuel, suffers with leukemia and he needs a bone marrow transplant. They thought they were covered, only to learn that their policy had a million dollar lifetime cap. A million dollars sounds like a lot of money -- and it is -- they surely never would have expected to exceed it. But health care costs are spiraling out of control and let's face it, the truth is, health insurance companies don't want to cover sick people.

"Sadly, after multiple rounds of chemotherapy, and a relapse earlier this year requiring additional treatment for Samuel, the Bords have reached their cap. What are Rich and Amy going to do? How on earth will they pay for the expensive procedure necessary for their son? In a nation as bountiful as ours, why on earth should anyone have to choose from such impossible options?"

"We must continue to demand comprehensive reform – together. Too many West Virginians get drawn out onto that tightrope – they feel completely alone in their fight with nothing to protect them from soaring medical bills, shrinking health benefits, and profit-hungry insurance companies.

"Well you are not alone. And I am never going to stop fighting for you to have affordable, stable and reliable health care – never."