

U.S. Congressman Adam Kinzinger and made a stop in Pontiac Tuesday to speak with regional leaders about topics that affect rural health care.

The congressman took part in a health care roundtable discussion at OSF HealthCare Saint James-John W. Albrecht Medical Center. The roundtable was co-hosted by OSF Saint James and the Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council.

Representatives from OSF HealthCare shared questions and concerns with Rep. Kinzinger, along with the Mayor of Streator, Illinois and other community leaders from Heritage Health, Evenglow Lodge and The Pointe at Pontiac.

“This is an opportunity for me to hear from you, find out what you are seeing on the ground and take your concerns back to DC,” Congressman Kinzinger told the group.

The group discussed topics like the need for mental health resources and the Affordable Care Act. Rep. Kinzinger also touted the importance of innovation in health care, and how new technologies have the power to drastically reduce the cost of care.

“One of the areas I am actually really optimistic about is the role that I think innovation and technology are going to play in bringing the cost of health care down,” he said. “For instance, look at wearable devices that let you know if you are pre-diabetic or you have heart disease. If we can get people living healthier and being more aware of it, we can bring that cost curve down. And as you know, if we bring the cost of medicine down through innovation, you have better quality, better access, and frankly there’s more money to spend on people at that point.”

Another major issue in the 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is the challenge of opioid addiction and abuse. Rep. Kinzinger says the concern is a common theme throughout the district, and says he wants to find new ways to introduce alternative pain management methods.

“We all know the problem when it comes to opioid abuse, but we also know there are people who legitimately need these medicines,” he said. “We are trying to figure out areas where there are government barriers to find alternative methods to treat pain. There is a very important need for opioids, but is there something out there that in some of these folks’ cases that is non-addictive and can do the same kind of thing? And if there is, is the government blocking either the introduction of these medicines, the research of it? So we are trying to find ways for the government to back off and give room for innovation.”

Rep. Kinzinger was first elected to congress in 2010. He currently serves on the Committee on Energy and Commerce in the House. His subcommittee assignments are Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection, Communications and Technology, and Energy. The Congressman also serves on the Committee of Foreign Affairs and serves on the Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa, as well as the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific.