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WASHINGTON — A U.S. House committee Tuesday approved legislation to repeal the controversial Independent Payment Advisory Board, a Medicare cost-cutting commission created by the Obama administration's 2010 health care law, which has been derided by some critics as a "death panel."

The full House could vote by the end of this month on the legislation, which cleared the House Energy and Commerce Committee by voice vote with no recorded opposition. Rep. Charles Bass, R-N.H., a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, said in a statement: "We've already seen the extent to which the president's health care law will infringe on an individual's right to make his or her own health care decisions. Now the president wants to put an unelected board of 15 bureaucrats between seniors and their doctors."

The IPAB would consist of 15 Senate-confirmed experts with control over Medicare costs. While the board is barred from recommending changes that would reduce payments to certain Medicare providers prior to 2020, and is also prohibited from recommending changes in such areas as premiums, benefits and eligibility that could result in the "rationing" of medical care, some Republicans have charged that such rationing would be inevitable with the IPAB in place.

"More alarmingly, IPAB will ration care by threatening to force physicians to stop accepting new Medicare patients," Bass contended.

While repeal of the IPAB cleared the Energy and Commerce Committee by voice vote Tuesday, it is not expected to get far if it reaches the Democratic-controlled Senate. But the move by the Republican-controlled House is likely to provide fodder for the coming election season, as congressional Republicans over the past year have called for repealing the Obama health care law — the Affordable Care Act — while voting to roll back some of its key provisions.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., indicated late Tuesday that she opposes doing away with the board. "Sen. Shaheen believes that a repeal of IPAB doesn't make sense at a time when we need to control the rise in health care costs in order to preserve Medicare's solvency," said Shaheen spokeswoman Faryl Ury.

While he does not sit on the Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Frank Guinta, R-N.H., weighed in with support of the repeal. "Medical costs must be lowered; but there's a right way to reduce them, and IPAB isn't it," he said. "IPAB is another example of government gone wild under the new health care reform law."

Immediately after the committee's vote, American Medical Association President Peter W. Carmel released a statement supporting the repeal.

"The AMA has actively supported repeal of the IPAB because it would add to the problems

caused by the broken Medicare physician payment formula," he said. "The IPAB would have far too little accountability and the ability to make across-the-board Medicare cuts."

Congress has stepped in repeatedly in recent years to modify the Medicare physician payment formula — in a move that has become known as the "doc fix"— amid concerns that many physicians would otherwise stop accepting Medicare patients.

Efforts to obtain comment from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which administers the Medicare program, were unsuccessful by presstime on Tuesday.