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**Four Leading Medical Organizations
Urge Congress to Protect Patients' Access to Health Care**

Use caution in considering change to current law, groups say

WASHINGTON, DC—Four medical organizations representing nearly 400,000 physicians and medical students have called on the 115th Congress to maintain Americans' access to comprehensive health benefits and ensure a stable insurance market in any health reform legislation they consider.

In a letter sent today to congressional leaders by the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the organizations urged Congress not to increase the number of uninsured, to ensure a viable health care safety net and to ensure vital patient protections in the health insurance marketplace, among other recommendations.

“Our organizations have long supported policies that ensure access to health care coverage for all Americans,” said John Meigs, Jr., MD, president of the AAFP. “Our members cared for patients who had no insurance before health system reform and saw the devastating effects of delayed or denied health services. Since 2010, they have seen the positive impact of health care reform. They know what the consequences will be if Congress eliminates or dismantles the current law’s access provisions and patient protections.”

In the letter, the four physician organizations outline specific principles to follow in considering changes to current health care law:

Ensure a viable health care safety net for low-income Americans and their children.

“Right now, we are experiencing historic lows in the number of uninsured children in this country, and that is in large part due to the success of Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, along with Affordable Care Act protections like allowing children to remain on their parents’ insurance until they turn 26,” said Benard Dreyer, MD, FAAP, immediate past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics. “As we face an uncertain health care landscape, we cannot leave our youngest members of society without reliable access to health care coverage. Pediatricians know what children need, and we look forward to working with Congress and our colleagues in medicine to protect our patients.”

Preserve coverage and affordability of health insurance through premium assistance and cost-sharing subsidies for Americans who have bought plans through the marketplaces or qualified for Medicaid coverage.

“Working class people are the ones most at risk of being priced out of having health insurance if premium and cost-sharing subsidies are eliminated,” said Nitin S. Damle, MD, MS, MACP, ACP president. “In my own state of Rhode Island alone, 79,000 people could lose coverage, a 136 percent increase in the number of uninsured. As a practicing internist, the last thing I want to see is for us to go back to the days when my hard-working patients had to go without health insurance because there were no federal subsidies to help them afford the premiums or deductibles charged by commercial insurers. Many of these patients would delay or not seek care, leading potentially to serious health consequences.”

Preserve health benefits regardless of pre-existing conditions, family history, age, gender, race, national origin or disability.

"Access to preventive health care is essential to women living healthy lives," said Thomas Gellhaus, MD, president of ACOG. "It wasn't long ago that having a C-section or being a victim of domestic violence were considered pre-existing conditions that made it more difficult for women to obtain coverage and access to care. Prior to the ACA, 13 percent of pregnant women were uninsured--a time when prenatal care is critical to ensure healthy mothers and babies. Uninsured women with breast cancer were 30 to 50 percent more likely to die from the disease; and 60 percent faced greater risk of late-stage cervical cancer diagnosis due to lapsed screening. We cannot go back to a time when our patients couldn't get coverage because of pre-existing conditions, family history, gender, or race. It is not acceptable to charge women more for insurance just because they're women, deny them maternity coverage, or drop a breast cancer patient's coverage mid-treatment because she's reached her lifetime cap. We must continue to make health care accessible and affordable for all."

As noted in the letter, these frontline physicians care for legislators’ constituents in rural, urban, wealthy and low-income communities, and are the foundation of the American health care system.

“Our organizations have long supported policies that promote access to health care coverage for all Americans,” the letter says. “We remain steadfast in pursuit of this goal. Key reforms enacted over the past decade, specifically those included in the ACA and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) have driven the uninsured rate to historic lows, helped ensure access to essential benefits, and strengthened consumer protections for all Americans. We also recognize and support the need to improve current laws to foster more competition and choice, ensure well-functioning insurance markets, promote patient-centered care, expand choice of physician, ensure network adequacy, and encourage state innovation.”

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About the American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 124,900 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care. Family physicians conduct approximately one in five office visits -- that's 192 million visits annually or 48 percent more than the next most visited medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care. To learn more about the specialty of family medicine, the AAFP's [positions \(5 page PDF\)](#) on issues and clinical care, and for downloadable multi-media highlighting family medicine, visit www.aafp.org/media. For information about health care, health conditions and wellness, please visit the AAFP's award-winning consumer website, www.FamilyDoctor.org/www.familydoctor.org.

About the American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 66,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org and follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds.

About the American College of Physicians

The [American College of Physicians](#) is the largest medical specialty organization in the United States. ACP members include 148,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Follow ACP on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (The College), a 501(c)(3) organization, is the nation's leading group of physicians providing health care for women. As a private, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization of more than 57,000 members, The College strongly advocates for quality health care for women, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education of its members, promotes patient education, and increases awareness among its members and the public of the changing issues facing women's health care. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), a 501(c)(6) organization, is its companion.