

April 13, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing over 400,000 physician and medical student members, we write to urge that Congress move away from harmful legislative proposals that repeal or weaken key current law coverage and consumer protections, and instead take immediate action to help stabilize insurance markets and to pass a long-term funding extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We also urge you to strive to reach agreement on longer-term bipartisan solutions that make coverage and health care more accessible and affordable for all Americans.

Our groups believe strongly that health care policy, just like health care itself, must abide by the overarching principal of "First, Do No Harm" to patients. Our assessment of the American Health Care Act (AHCA) is that it would have caused considerable harm to millions of patients cared for by our members, with the most vulnerable, including children, the elderly, those with complex health needs and low-income individuals, being especially at risk of losing coverage, benefits and consumer protections. While we are encouraged that the bill was withdrawn, we continue to urge Congress not to take any future legislative steps that would undermine coverage and consumer protections by capping or block-granting Medicaid funding, eliminating funding for Medicaid expansion, reducing the value of premium and cost-sharing subsidies, and/or weakening the Title I protections in the Affordable Care Act including essential benefits requirements, community-rating, and guaranteed issue.

Instead, we urge Congress to consider the following recommendations:

First, ensure that coverage remains affordable. This includes maintaining current law premium and cost-sharing subsidies so that low-income individuals and families can afford to buy insurance and avoiding proposals that would increase premiums and reduce access to coverage and benefits.

Second, work to ensure that a person's ZIP code does not determine their insurance options. Stabilize the marketplaces, especially in areas of the country that currently have few coverage options. The deadline is fast approaching for health plans to determine their participation in the exchanges in 2018

and to file their proposed premiums with HHS. We reiterate the great urgency to take action to provide the necessary stability.

Third, our organizations urge Congress to take swift action to provide long-term, adequate funding to ensure that CHIP can continue offering coverage to the more than 8 million children who rely on it. State governors and legislatures require certainty regarding continuation of this important program to conduct budget planning for the next fiscal year.

Finally, we welcome the opportunity to work with you to develop patient-focused bipartisan solutions to the many challenges facing our health care system. In addition to the three priorities we identified, we would also like to see progress made to reduce prescription drug costs, expand consumer choice through strengthened network adequacy standards, reform medical liability laws, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens on physicians and patients, and promote additional innovation in health care delivery and financing, to name a few. We hope to work closely with you to advance these and other priorities to improve our nation's health care system.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these concerns and recommendations. We look forward to working with you to improve our health care system for our 400,000 physician and medical student members and the patients they care for.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Family Physicians
American College of Physicians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Psychiatric Association