

April 26, 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

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

Our organizations, which represent over 560,000 physicians and medical students, remain concerned with ongoing efforts that in our view could destabilize our nation's health care system. We believe that pending legislation proposals would dramatically increase costs for older individuals, result in millions of people losing their health care coverage, and return to a system that allows for discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions. We are especially concerned about the changes to Medicaid and Medicaid financing contained within AHCA.

Our members are the frontline physicians who provide physical and mental health care services to millions of men, women, and children each day. They provide care to children, the aged, those with chronic conditions, people battling substance use disorders, and the many individuals who are seeking prevention and wellness services in an attempt to be healthier. Our members see firsthand the important role that health care coverage and access to affordable, high quality care plays in people's lives and their pursuit of better health and well-being. They also recall those days when patients faced discrimination based on their age, gender, or health conditions, and remember when those with mental and behavioral health needs were denied coverage.

This experience with the health care system is why our organizations strongly oppose the compromises that have been recently reported. These compromises are built on the flawed foundation of the American Health Care Act (AHCA), which would result in millions of Americans and, according to the CBO, over 7 million with employer-sponsored insurance, losing their coverage.

Further, these compromises would allow individual states to obtain waivers to opt-out of important benefit and patient protection provisions in current law. Under the proposed "Limited Waiver" authority, insurers in such states would once again be allowed to charge unaffordable premiums to people with pre-existing conditions based on their individual health risks, and decline to cover ten categories of essential services including prescription drugs, physician and hospital visits, preventive services, and mental and behavioral health benefits. We are especially concerned that these changes would:

- Allow insurers to deny millions of people facing addiction access to treatment and therapy, when such services are needed more than ever to address the opioid epidemic in the United States.
- Make health care even more expensive and further reduce access to care for millions, especially those over the age of 50;
- Force individuals with multiple chronic conditions into underfunded state-sponsored high risk pools, which have been proven ineffective numerous times;

- Allow for gender rating by enabling states to opt out of maternity care coverage.

We urge Congress to reject these “compromises” and instead focus on enacting policies that improve upon current law, thus ensuring that more people have access to affordable health care coverage. Our organizations have provided several recommendations on how current law could be improved to accomplish these goals. A few of those recommendations are:

- Ensure that coverage remains affordable by maintaining premium and cost-sharing subsidies available under current law.
- Stabilize the individual market.
- Take immediate action to provide long-term, adequate funding for the CHIP program.
- Identify and implement policies that make primary, preventive, and mental health more readily available to all Americans.
- Identify and implement policies that lower costs for individuals and families, especially the costs of pharmaceutical treatments.
- Reform our medical liability laws.
- Reduce the administrative and regulatory burdens that add costs and inefficiencies to our delivery and insurance systems, and take away valuable time for us to care for our patients.

We recognize that our health care system is not perfect and reforms are needed. Our organizations and our members stand ready to work with Congress and the Administration to improve our health care system. However, we urge Congress to reject the AHCA and instead focus on the implementation of policies that aim to improve our health care system versus those that seek to destabilize it and would make quality health care less available to millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

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

C: The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable Steve Scalise
Members, U.S. House of Representatives