June 26, 2017

An Open Letter to the U.S. Senate:

We write as physicians and other healthcare professionals to urge you to oppose the currently proposed healthcare bill that will put the health and lives of millions of our patients at risk. While we are unable to be in Washington, DC this week, we feel an urgent need to speak out on behalf of our patients.

As physicians, we take care of vulnerable patients who rely on Medicaid coverage or who are uninsured. The version of the American Healthcare Act bill passed by the House, and the Senate version just released, will result in millions of Americans losing access to quality, affordable health insurance. Furthermore, patients with pre-existing health conditions will face the possibility of going back to the time when insurers could charge them premiums that made access to coverage out of the question.

We strongly encourage you not to cap or cut federal Medicaid funding, not to phase out the Medicaid expansion, not to reverse non-discrimination protections that allow access to healthcare coverage for individuals with pre-existing conditions, and not to reverse essential health services. As providers, we see first-hand the high cost of being uninsured in the United States. Without healthcare coverage, patients are more likely to present late with diseases that would have been manageable if identified and treated earlier. Patients who present late for diagnosis and treatment experience a substantial decrease in life expectancy, have dramatically higher healthcare costs, and experience loss of productivity. This is true for Americans across our country with very common conditions including cancer, diabetes, hepatitis C, heart disease and mental health and substance use disorders.

We join many other healthcare organizations – the American Medical Association, the American Heart Association, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the American Thoracic Society, the American Cancer Society, the American Nurses Association, the American Hospital Association and others – in urging you to consider the long-term impact of your upcoming vote on a healthcare bill. Please vote NO on a healthcare bill that will repeal and reverse healthcare coverage gains. We ask you to instead work with physician, patient, hospital and other provider groups to craft bipartisan solutions so that all American families can access affordable and meaningful coverage, while preserving the safety net for vulnerable populations.

Respectfully submitted by 153 healthcare providers,
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