



June 28, 2017

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As leaders of organizations dedicated to protecting and advancing the public's health, we write to express our strong opposition to the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA, H.R. 1628) and any legislation that would reduce affordable and comprehensive healthcare coverage or eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund). Far from delivering "better care," this bill is a significant threat to the health of our communities and to the public health infrastructure the nation relies on.

We are gravely concerned that the BCRA would result in the loss of health coverage for 22 million of our fellow Americans by 2026, taking the uninsured rate up to 49 million people. The pain from the BCRA will be felt in every state, every congressional district, and every neighborhood. Vulnerable individuals and families will suffer the most.

By repealing the Prevention Fund, the BCRA would leave a devastating gap in the core public health funding needed for cancer screening, immunizations, emergency preparedness, and chronic disease prevention amongst other vital, proven public health efforts. The Prevention Fund currently makes up 12 percent of the budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Eliminating these investments dismantles the capacity of public health to do its work, which will inevitably lead to increased health costs; keeping people healthy reduces the \$3.2 trillion in annual health costs. Without the Prevention Fund, states stand to lose over \$3 billion in public health investments over the next five years alone. States rely on this funding to prevent chronic disease, halt the spread of infections, invest in the community infrastructure that support health and safety, and address pressing issues such as the opioid epidemic.

The BCRA would dismantle Medicaid as we know it, cutting a staggering \$772 billion from the program over the next decade and placing over 70 million Americans currently served through the program—including older Americans, children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities—at risk. By scaling back eligibility for insurance subsidies to 350 percent of the federal poverty level, the BCRA would make the cost of insurance unaffordable for millions of low-income Americans, and in particular lower-income older Americans who are not yet eligible for Medicare. Allowing states to waive essential health benefits and weaken coverage requirements would leave patients with pre-existing conditions facing sky rocketing premiums and out-of-pocket costs.

At a time when maternal mortality is on the rise, the bill would harm the health of women and children by allowing states to opt out of requiring coverage of essential health benefits like maternity care and birth control; by stripping Medicaid, which currently covers roughly half of all births in the US; and by suspending all federal funding to Planned Parenthood for one year, a provider that one in five women rely on to meet their basic healthcare needs. The bill would also allow states to opt out of the requirement to provide access to evidence-based clinical preventive services, which are crucial in detecting diseases in early stages when there is a better chance for recovery.

To address the disastrous opioid epidemic, which kills nearly 100 Americans a day, we need greater investments in substance misuse treatment and evidence based public health strategies. This legislation would be a step backward in the effort to address this epidemic, as funding included for opioid misuse will not be enough to compensate for the losses in Medicaid coverage which have helped expand access to lifesaving treatment. The BCRA also cuts public health funding needed to expand prevention activities that address the underlying drivers of the opioid epidemic. Estimates have found that the total cost of coverage for people receiving treatment for opioid use disorder could reach \$220 billion over the next decade.

We urge you to place the health and well-being of our children, families and communities ahead of politics by maintaining the funding made possible by the Prevention and Public Health Fund and working in a bipartisan manner to improve and build upon the successes of the Affordable Care Act. Public health is at the very core of keeping our country safe, healthy, resilient, and secure. The BCRA will result in an America where preventable suffering and death are more widespread, and an America where the poorest and sickest communities fall even farther behind. We urge you to vote against this damaging legislation when it comes before the full Senate for a vote.

Sincerely,



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