



Leading Patient Advocacy Groups Stand Together to Oppose American Health Care Act

Legislation would leave millions with inadequate, unaffordable care as they battle chronic and other major health conditions

Washington (May 1, 2017) – On behalf of more than one hundred million Americans battling chronic and other major health conditions, a coalition of 10 patient organizations remains united in its opposition to the American Health Care Act (AHCA). In March, our patient advocacy organizations collectively urged Congress to ensure that any changes made to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) provide affordable, accessible and adequate coverage and do not result in a loss of coverage for any Americans. The AHCA would do the opposite, causing at least 24 million Americans to lose health insurance, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office.

As introduced, the bill would profoundly reduce coverage for millions of Americans—including many low-income and disabled individuals who rely on Medicaid—and increase out-of-pocket costs for the sickest and oldest among us. We are alarmed by recent harmful changes to the AHCA, including provisions that will weaken key consumer protections. These changes include allowing states to waive the requirement for essential health benefits, which could deny patients the care and treatment they need to treat their conditions.

Another change allows states to waive protections against health status rating. Weakening these rules would enable insurers to charge higher prices to people with pre-existing conditions, possibly making insurance unaffordable for those who need it most. States that waive health status rating protections would be required to set up a high risk sharing program, which may include a high-risk pool. Offering these risk sharing mechanisms as an alternative to affordable health insurance is not a viable option, particularly high-risk pools. Previous state high risk pools resulted in higher premiums, long waiting lists and inadequate coverage.

Weakening protections in favor of high-risk pools would also undermine the ban on discrimination based on health status. The individuals and families we represent cannot go back to a time when people with pre-existing conditions could be denied coverage or forced to choose between purchasing basic necessities and affording their health care coverage. Given these factors, we oppose the latest draft of the AHCA. We urge Members of Congress to reject this legislation.

As Congress considers this legislation, we challenge lawmakers to remember their commitment to their constituents and the American people to protect lifesaving health care for millions of Americans, including those who struggle every day with chronic and other major health conditions. We stand ready to work with Congress toward a proposal that ensures all Americans have affordable access to the care they need.

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