



January 5, 2017

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

Our organizations are very concerned about proposals that would throw California's health system into chaos, removing the guarantees provided to us by Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act. We urge you to invest in and improve our health system, and not pursue efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, cap the Medicaid program through a block grant or per capita cap, and privatize Medicare. Such proposals would cause millions of Californians to lose their health coverage, cut billions of federal dollars that flow to California, and ultimately lead to increased health costs for everyone.

Our state cannot return to the days when nearly one out of every five Californians was uninsured and when insurance companies could deny coverage to the sick and kick people off insurance if they ran up big bills. Californians should not be forced to live sicker, die younger, and be one emergency room visit away from financial ruin.

The Affordable Care Act should not be repealed, especially not without a clear replacement that ensures every Californian who has benefitted from health reform will keep the financial assistance, benefits, and consumer protections they currently count on to meet their health care needs. We absolutely cannot allow health coverage for millions of Californians to be left in limbo if it is repealed without any replacement in place.

California has made enormous progress in the last five years, improving the health care system on which we all rely. We ask you to help protect the important gains our state has made:

- California has reduced the uninsured rate from nearly 19 percent in 2010 to 8.6 percent in 2015—the biggest drop of any state in the nation over the last three years. There are now 3.5 million more Californians with health insurance.¹
- Up to 16 million Californians with pre-existing conditions like cancer, asthma, and diabetes can no longer be denied or charged more for health insurance.²
- All health plans, including Medicare and private insurance, are required to cover preventive services at no cost – like contraception, recommended cancer screenings, and vaccines.
- Over 12 million Californians, including people with employer coverage, no longer face lifetime caps on their benefits that effectively cut off coverage for the sickest individuals when they needed it the most, exposing people with the worst conditions like cancer to bankruptcy and home foreclosure.³
- Medi-Cal (Medicaid) has been strengthened and improved. It now provides quality affordable health coverage to nearly 14 million Californians, including hard-working adults, the elderly, children, and people with disabilities. Medi-Cal provides coverage to 1-in-3 adults and half of California’s children. Over 3 million Californians have gained coverage through the Medicaid expansion.⁴
- Over 90% of the 1.3 million Californians who buy coverage through Covered California get federal financial assistance to better afford private insurance.⁵

California could not have made these gains without critical federal dollars. All of these federal dollars flow to doctors, hospitals, clinics, and other health care providers across the state creating jobs, boosting local economies and supporting vital health care services for millions of Californians.

- Our Medi-Cal program gets nearly \$16 billion under the recent Medicaid expansion, which helps cover over 3.6 million low-income California parents and childless adults.⁶
- Our health system and economy also depends on the nearly \$5 billion in federal premium and cost-sharing subsidies for the 1.3 million consumers who buy coverage through Covered California.⁷
- California can lose additional billions of federal dollars, reducing current federal funding from \$60 billion to \$30-\$40 billion if proposals to cut Medicaid funding through block grants or per capita caps become a reality, placing millions of low-income Californians at risk of losing part or all of their health coverage.⁸
- California cannot make up these cuts with state money: our entire General Fund budget for 2016-17 is \$125 billion. There is no way we can replace tens of billions of dollars in federal cuts, and the loss of federal dollars would result in millions of Californians losing their coverage.

Finally, Medicare provides coverage for over 5 million California seniors and people with disabilities.⁹ Repealing the ACA would roll back the improvements in prescription drug coverage and undo cost-saving measures that have increased the program's sustainability. Furthermore, Medicare beneficiaries will lose the ability to access preventative services with no deductible or co-pay, which will increase barriers to detecting and treating health problems early.

The health and lives of millions of Californians are at stake. We ask you to uphold the significant gains that have been made and ensure that any action taken by Congress safeguards the coverage, benefits, consumer and financial protections that the people of California currently enjoy.

Sincerely,

1. Access Support Network - San Luis Obispo, Monterey and San Benito Counties
2. ACLU - California
3. ACT for Women and Girls
4. Advancement Project
5. AFSCME
6. Alameda County Community Food Bank
7. Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment
8. Alzheimer's Greater Los Angeles
9. Americans for Democratic Action
10. American Nurses Association - California
11. APLA Health
12. Asian Americans Advancing Justice - LA
13. Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum
14. Black Wellness Council
15. California Alliance for Retired Americans
16. California Association of Food Banks
17. California Coverage and Health Initiatives

18. CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates
19. California Health Professional Student Alliance
20. California Hepatitis Alliance
21. California Labor Federation
22. California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
23. California Immigrant Policy Center
24. California Pan Ethnic Health Network
25. California Partnership
26. California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
27. California Physicians Alliance
28. California School Employees Association
29. California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS
30. Cares Community Health
31. Children's Defense Fund - California
32. Children NOW
33. The Children's Partnership
34. Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County
35. Community Health Councils
36. Community Health Initiative - Napa County
37. Community Health Initiative - Orange County
38. Community Health Initiative – Kern County
39. Community Health Partnership
40. Community Resources for Independent Living
41. Congress of California Seniors
42. Consumers Union
43. Contra Costa Community Clinic Consortium
44. Contra Costa Organizing for Action
45. Doctors For America – California
46. Essential Access Health
47. Equality California
48. Father's and Families of San Joaquin
49. Greenlining Institute
50. Health Access California
51. HealthRIGHT 360
52. Hepatitis C Support Project
53. IATSE Local 706
54. IATSE Local 871
55. Jewish Family Services LA
56. Justice in Aging
57. Korean Community Center of the East Bay
58. Lifelong Medical Care
59. LGBT Health and Human Services Network of California
60. Los Angeles LGBT Center
61. Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California

62. Maternal and Child Health Access
63. Mi Familia Vota
64. Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project
65. National Association of Social Workers
66. National Health Law Program
67. National Immigration Law Center
68. PICO CA
69. Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
70. Positive Women's Network USA
71. Project Inform
72. Public Health Advocates
73. Sacramento LGBT Community Center
74. San Francisco Aids Foundation
75. SEIU California
76. Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County
77. Social Good Solutions
78. St. Anthony's San Francisco
79. United Domestic Workers/ AFSCME Local 3930
80. Vision y Compromiso
81. Voices for Progress
82. Western Center on Law and Poverty
83. Women's Health Specialists of California
84. Young Invincibles

¹ New Census Numbers Show That Health Care Reform Continues to Work in California. California Budget and Policy Center. <http://calbudgetcenter.org/blog/new-census-numbers-show-health-care-reform-continues-work-california> (September 14, 2016).

² 5 Years Later: How the Affordable Care Act is Working for California. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts-and-features/state-by-state/how-aca-is-working-for-california/index.html>

³ Id.

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Covered California, March 2016 Active Member Profile. Available at: http://hbex.coveredca.com/data-research/library/active-member-profiles/CC_Membership_Profile_2016_03.xlsx

⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, block grants or per capita cap proposals would result in overall federal funding to state Medicaid programs to be cut about one-third to one-half by 2026.

⁹ CMS Medicare Enrollment Dashboard, available at: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Dashboard/Medicare-Enrollment/Enrollment%20Dashboard.html>