



Working to Reduce Poverty in America.

June 26, 2017

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator,

I write to you today on behalf of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) to express our strong opposition to the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 (BCRA). Throughout the health care reform discussions, CCUSA has insisted that any reform must protect the millions who have access to health care coverage, or gained access to health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act, and must provide access to health care coverage to the millions still living without affordable health care. Like the bill that passed the House, the BCRA falls far short of these goals and will have a devastating impact on the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in our country.

CCUSA's work is rooted in the Church's moral and social teaching, which holds in accordance with human dignity, that health care is a basic human right. Across the country Catholic Charities agencies provided health care-related services to more than 860,000 individuals. These agencies see firsthand the devastating results of inadequate health care. They see the consequences of untreated mental illness, they work to respond to the growing opioid epidemic and they support families who are struggling between the decision to pay their health care bills or rent.

Instead of expanding access to health care coverage, the BRCA reduces coverage for those least able to afford it. By eliminating the Medicaid expansion, which provided access to health care coverage to approximately 11 million individuals, and by changing traditional Medicaid from an entitlement to a block grant, millions of low-income individuals and families will lose access to affordable health care coverage. Under the BRCA, next year alone 15 million more people will be uninsured compared to current law. It is deeply shameful that instead of improving our health care system, the bill provides tax cuts for people making over \$200,000 per year while at the same time demanding dramatic cuts or eliminating programs which help those most in need and most unlikely to afford health-care.

While the legislation makes efforts to better protect life and increase flexibility to states, a bill that rolls back gains in health care for the poor and vulnerable is deeply regretful. The Medicaid program is a vital component of the social safety net, which provides access to health care at a lower cost than traditional insurance, funds nearly 50 percent of all births and provides access to life saving care for children, the elderly and the disabled.

Pope Francis reminds us that "access to health care services cannot be a privilege." CCUSA urges you to reject the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 and craft a health care bill which truly expands coverage, reduces costs and respects human life and dignity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna J. Markham OP, PhD".

Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD
President and CEO

Episcopal Liaison
The Most Reverend
David A. Zubik, D.D.
Bishop of Pittsburgh

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