



American College of Preventive Medicine

May 9, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM), the medical specialty society representing physicians who dedicate their careers to disease prevention and health promotion at the health system level, I write to urge careful consideration of any replacement legislation to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Currently, the American Health Care Act (AHCA) as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives would result in millions of Americans losing insurance coverage. Further, the bill allows states to opt out of requiring health plans to provide essential benefits, including preventive services, eliminates protections for people with preexisting conditions, and repeals the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF). ACPM is committed to improving our nation's healthcare system and expanding access to preventive services, and this legislation takes us away from these goals.

To improve our healthcare system, any new legislation must retain coverage for those currently insured, continue the Medicaid expansion initiative, and ensure patient protections in the marketplace, including prohibitions on benefit caps, on discrimination against persons with preexisting conditions, premium assistance, and reductions in out-of-pocket payments.

First-dollar coverage of preventive services must be continued for all plans to ensure a healthier population. The cost of preventable diseases, including obesity, smoking-related illnesses, heart disease, and diabetes, represents a substantial portion of government spending and costs the U.S. over one trillion dollars per year. Comprehensive preventive services can combat these chronic diseases, leading to lower overall costs, increased productivity, improved quality of life, and saved lives.

Repealing the Prevention and Public Health Fund would result in a massive blow to vital programs of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The cut would eliminate 12 percent of the CDC's total budget virtually overnight including a 50 percent reduction to the CDC's Section 317 immunization program. This program provides direct support to states and local communities to strengthen their vaccine and immunization infrastructure. Cutting the CDC's budget would result in the U.S. being ill-prepared for public health emergencies such as the Zika virus and other threats that loom on the horizon. Any replacement legislation must recognize the CDC's role in protecting the health and safety of Americans.

As the Senate embarks on its own effort to replace the ACA, we urge you to recognize that improvements in population health, as well as control of health care costs, are most readily achieved

through public health initiatives and enhanced access to clinical preventive services. Importantly, we must note that the United States currently suffers from a shortage of physicians trained in public health and prevention, a shortage that is largely due to the fact that residency programs in preventive medicine, unlike residencies in other specialties, are not supported by Medicare graduate medical education (GME) payments. Unfortunately, the only source of federal support is through limited grants available through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). We urge you to include adequate funding for preventive medicine residency training programs in any ACA replacement legislation.

ACPM stands ready to work with you on any plan that improves our nation's health care system and we can be a valuable resource on aligning incentives aimed at advancing disease prevention and health promotion. Please feel free to contact Kate McFadyen at kmcfadyen@acpm.org should you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel S. Blumenthal". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Daniel S. Blumenthal, MD, MPH
President, American College of Preventive Medicine

cc: Senate Finance Committee
Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee