July 24, 2017

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write to once again express our strong opposition to the Better Care Reconciliation Act and any other legislation that would repeal or weaken the Affordable Care Act. The current proposals that may be considered by the Senate this week do nothing to improve the health of the American public and will have a significant negative impact on the health of all Americans, especially the most vulnerable.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the BCRA would result in 22 million Americans losing health insurance coverage by 2026. The Obamacare Repeal Reconciliation Act would repeal major portions of the ACA with no replacement and would lead to 32 million Americans losing health insurance coverage. Both proposals would eliminate Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood for one year resulting in patients losing care, more unintended births and increased spending for the Medicaid program. The current proposals before the Senate would also significantly reduce or eliminate critical premium subsidies for low- and moderate-income families and significantly, end the ACA’s Medicaid expansion and significantly reduce federal Medicaid funding to the states. These proposals would hit low-income and older Americans especially hard by leading to unaffordable premiums, higher out-of-pocket costs and significantly less or no coverage at all. Health insurance coverage is critical to preventing disease, ensuring health and well-being and driving down the use of costlier providers of care.

The current Senate proposals would also eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund, the first and only mandatory funding stream specifically dedicated to public health and prevention activities. The fund has already provided more than $6 billion to support a variety of public health activities in every state including tracking and preventing infectious diseases like the Ebola and Zika viruses, community and clinical prevention programs, preventing childhood lead poisoning and expanding access to childhood immunizations. Eliminating the fund would devastate the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The fund currently makes up 12 percent of CDC’s budget and eliminating this funding stream would force Congress to replace the funding through the regular appropriations process where resources for nondefense discretionary programs are already too low.

While the Affordable Care Act is not perfect, the law has made progress in addressing the biggest challenges facing our health system including reducing the number of uninsured, uneven quality of care, deaths due to medical errors, discriminatory practices by health insurance providers and the shrinking ranks of the nation's primary care providers. The ACA has made progress in shifting our
health system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy. We ask you to oppose this and future efforts to repeal or weaken the ACA. Instead, we urge you to work on a bipartisan basis to improve and build upon the successes of the ACA and to work to provide health insurance coverage to the more than 28 million who still lack coverage. We look forward to working with you to create the healthiest nation in one generation.

Sincerely,

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director