



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
For science. For action. For health.

Sept. 18, 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 express our strong opposition to the Graham-Cassidy bill and any other legislation that would repeal or weaken the Affordable Care Act. Similar to other proposals that we ardently opposed, the Graham-Cassidy plan would have the same damaging consequences for the health of Americans, especially the most vulnerable. Instead, we ask that you continue to build on the balanced, bipartisan efforts already underway to stabilize the individual market and put forward additional legislation to strengthen the health care system.

Much like previous proposals to repeal or weaken the ACA, the Graham-Cassidy plan would take health insurance coverage away from millions of people, eliminate critical public health funding, devastate the Medicaid program, increase out-of-pocket costs and weaken or eliminate protections for people living with pre-existing conditions. Millions of Americans losing health insurance coverage is a major national concern. Health insurance coverage is critical to preventing disease, ensuring health and well-being and driving down the use of costlier providers of care. The Graham-Cassidy plan would end the ACA's Medicaid expansion and marketplace subsidies that reduce monthly premiums and out-of-pocket costs, and replace them with an inadequate block grant to states. This plan would significantly reduce federal Medicaid funding to all states. Some states would experience a sharp and immediate cut to federal Medicaid funding, with all states eventually being deeply impacted. The proposal 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. Additionally, the proposal 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.

Consistent with previous proposals, the Graham-Cassidy plan 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.

The Affordable Care Act 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 also made important 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 the Graham-Cassidy proposal and any future effort to repeal or weaken the ACA. Instead, we urge you to continue the bipartisan efforts to improve and build upon the successes of the ACA, and ensure 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "B".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director