

Sisters of St. Joseph - Baden  
Leadership Team  
1020 State Street  
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June 21, 2017

U.S. Senator Pat Toomey  
310 Grant Street, Suite 1440  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

U.S. Senator Bob Casey  
310 Grant Street, Suite 2415  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

**Dear Senator Toomey and Senator Casey:**

*As people of faith, we believe our nation's health care system cannot be run simply as a business because human lives are at stake.*

We are very concerned about proposals currently under consideration in the U.S. Senate that would result in the loss of health care for millions of Americans and changes in Medicaid that, nationally, will jeopardize health services for 70 million seniors, people with disabilities, children, and poor adults, hurt providers, and shift burdens to state budgets.

For more than 50 years, the federal government has matched state Medicaid spending on health and long-term care for low-income children and parents, seniors, and people with disabilities. Medicaid has been a resounding success, providing cost-efficient and high quality health care to our state's most vulnerable citizens. In fact, a 2016 national survey by the Commonwealth Fund found that Medicaid beneficiaries are just as likely to have a regular health care provider as those with private coverage and they rate the quality of care more highly than those with private coverage.

In Pennsylvania, Medicaid provides health care services to 2,531,200 people — nearly half of whom are children. Medicaid allows 640,000 people with disabilities to get the services they need to live independently and with dignity, and funds nearly one-third of all births in the Commonwealth. Medicaid is also a vital lifeline for 252,000 Pennsylvania seniors, covering the cost of nursing home care and long-term services in the home that Medicare does not cover.

Since 2014, when Pennsylvania expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, the number of uninsured people in the state has fallen by 6% as low-wage workers and poor adults gained coverage. Thanks to Medicaid Expansion, nearly 700,000 Pennsylvanians, including 82,000 veterans got health care.

The American Health Care Act not only rolls back this extension of health care to hundreds of thousands of people in our state that have no other source of coverage, but it would also create caps in the Medicaid program that would force a rationing of care as federal funding to states is cut. According to an Urban Institute estimate, Pennsylvania would have to raise taxes or cut other parts

of its budget by \$18 billion over ten years to maintain current coverage under Pennsylvania's Medicaid program, including those who gained coverage under expansion.<sup>1</sup>

The Congressional Budget Office projects that by 2026 under the AHCA, there will be 14 million fewer people with Medicaid coverage, 3 million fewer with employer-sponsored coverage, and 6 million fewer with individual market coverage. This means that 371,800 Pennsylvanians would lose Medicaid coverage, 129,200 would lose employer-sponsored coverage, and 275,700 would lose coverage in the individual market.

Behind these statistics are real people - human lives - many of whom are low-income Americans or working families who are already struggling to make ends meet. It will be harder and more expensive for them to get affordable nursing home care for an elderly parent or home-care services that allow many seniors to remain at home.

In April, the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposed the AHCA](#),<sup>2</sup> calling on Members of Congress to reconsider the impact this legislation will have on poor and vulnerable communities, particularly provisions that eliminate coverage by phasing out Medicaid expansion, cuts in Medicaid through per capita caps, and waivers that would permit insurers to discriminate based on pre-existing conditions:

*"It is deeply disappointing to many Americans that, in modifying the American Health Care Act to again attempt a vote, proponents of the bill left in place its serious flaws, including unacceptable modifications to Medicaid that will endanger coverage and affordability for millions of people, according to reports,"* said Bishop Dewane. *"Sadly, some of the recently proposed amendments — especially those designed to give states flexibility—lack apparent safeguards to ensure quality of care. These additions could severely impact many people with pre-existing conditions while risking for others the loss of access to various essential coverages."*

**As you consider how to move forward on health care with your colleagues in the Senate, we add our voices to those of our Catholic leaders quoted above to echo the same urgent sentiment:** reject any proposal that would take coverage away from millions of Pennsylvanians, that makes fundamental changes in Medicaid that could hurt the most vulnerable communities, and that dismantles protections for people with pre-existing conditions.

We join the voice of Pope Francis who reminds us that quality health care is a basic human right and a fundamental social good for all God's people. As Catholic sisters and members of Pennsylvania's faith community, we are inspired by the Gospel and our mission to respond to the urgent and critical needs of our neighbors, particularly the frail elderly, those who are poor and vulnerable, those with diminished mental or physical capacities, and those who are chronically ill.

***We welcome opportunities to discuss further how we can work together to improve and expand healthcare, and ask that you meet with a delegation of Catholic leaders to hear our concerns***

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<sup>1</sup> The Urban Institute, "The Impact of Per Capita Caps on Federal and State Medicaid Spending." March 2017: [http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89061/2001186-the\\_impact-of-per-capita-caps-on-federal-spending-and-state-medicaid-spending\\_2.pdf](http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89061/2001186-the_impact-of-per-capita-caps-on-federal-spending-and-state-medicaid-spending_2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, "U.S. Bishops Chairman Urges House Members To 'Insist On Changes' To Proposed Health Care Bill." April 2017: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2017/17-073.cfm>.

*before voting to advance the AHCA or a similar proposal.*

Sincerely,

**[The Sisters of St. Joseph - Baden](#)**

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