



December 12, 2017

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
United States Senate
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hatch:

On behalf of hundreds of millions of Americans with chronic and serious health care conditions, our 16 organizations urge the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act conference committee to remove language repealing the individual mandate penalty from the final legislation. Repealing the mandate would destabilize the individual health insurance market, reduce coverage for millions of Americans, and raise premiums.

Our organizations, representing some of the nation's leading patient and consumer groups, have defined a set of principles to assess any legislation that would impact the communities we serve.¹ These principles are specifically designed to protect the health and well-being of the millions of individuals and families we represent and their unique health care needs.

We are deeply concerned that repealing the individual mandate as part of H.R. 1, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, would undermine an important component of current law that ensures access to adequate health care remains affordable. Many individuals with pre-existing or serious health conditions have little choice but to remain in the individual insurance market. Ensuring that young and healthy people are included in the insurance pool helps keep premiums manageable and helps stabilize the individual market over the long term. Repealing the individual mandate without simultaneously enacting another mechanism that encourages young and healthy people to purchase insurance will destabilize current law, while also having a disproportionate impact on people with pre-existing conditions.

¹ Health Care Reform Principles: http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@adv/documents/downloadable/ucm_495416.pdf

Earlier this month, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) issued a letter that estimated the repeal of the mandate would result in millions more uninsured Americans and would increase premiums by an additional 10 percent each year.² We recognize that the current health care law and system are not perfect, but changes should work to stabilize the market and improve access to adequate, affordable health insurance rather than move backwards. We strongly urge conferees not to include the individual insurance mandate repeal in the final conference report. Instead, we implore Congress to pass bipartisan short-term stabilization legislation sponsored by Senators Alexander and Murray that will help mitigate coverage losses and the rising costs in our current health care system.

Any healthcare policies included in the tax package must reflect the real and urgent needs of Americans, particularly those with costly, serious, and chronic health conditions. We continue to stand ready to work with Congress on this and any future legislation that would impact our communities.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Liver Foundation
American Lung Association
Arthritis Foundation
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
Family Voices
Futures Without Violence
Lutheran Services in America
March of Dimes
National Health Council
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
Volunteers of America

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Paul Ryan

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

The Honorable Michael Enzi
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Tim Scott
The Honorable Pat Toomey
The Honorable Kevin Brady
The Honorable Devin Nunes
The Honorable Peter Roskam

The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Bernie Sanders
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
The Honorable Bob Menendez
The Honorable Tom Carper
The Honorable Richard Neal
The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
The Honorable Raul Grijalva
The Honorable Kathy Castor

² Congressional Budget Office, The Bipartisan Health Care Stabilization Act of 2017 and the Individual Mandate, November 29, 2017: <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53352-bhcsaandindividualmandate.pdf>

The Honorable Kristi Noem
The Honorable Rob Bishop
The Honorable Don Young
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable John Shimkus