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20 Patient Groups Urge Supreme Court to Uphold Health Care Law

COVID-19 Pandemic Makes Clear the Urgent Need for Patient Protections and Access to Health Insurance

Washington, D.C., May 13, 2020—Twenty patient groups representing millions of Americans with pre-existing conditions filed an *amicus curiae* (“friend-of-the-court”) brief today with the U.S. Supreme Court in the case *California v. Texas* (previously *Texas v. United States*), citing the devastating impact patients would face should the court rule to invalidate the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case after the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit struck down the individual mandate without a tax penalty as unconstitutional and sent the case back to the District Court to determine if the mandate can be “severed” from the rest of the law. The District Court previously ruled the entire law was invalid.

The patient groups argue the law has expanded access to health insurance coverage and has improved patient outcomes as Congress intended. Congress’s decision to keep the ACA in place after eliminating the tax penalty tied to the individual mandate reinforces that intent.

Following is the groups’ joint statement:

“While the coronavirus pandemic further highlights the importance of access to meaningful health insurance coverage for millions of Americans – especially for those who are at high-risk of being severely affected by the virus – patient protections in the ACA provide an essential lifeline for countless Americans who have pre-existing or acute conditions like heart disease, cancer, diabetes and lung diseases.

“If the entire health care law is invalidated, health plans could once again deny coverage to anyone with a pre-existing condition, set arbitrary lifetime and annual limits on care, and skirt essential benefits necessary to prevent and treat acute conditions. The link between access to comprehensive health coverage and patient outcomes is well established. Because of the ACA there have been statistically significant shifts toward early-stage diagnosis for several common cancers, a surge of people getting screened for and diagnosed with diabetes, and a significant drop in uninsured substance abuse or mental health disorder hospitalizations in states that expanded Medicaid.

“Invalidating the law would likely reverse these gains. It also would jeopardize the federal tax credits that make health insurance more affordable for millions of Americans, threatening their access to critical health coverage, and rescind Medicaid expansion funding, crippling the safety net health insurance program at a time when millions more unemployed Americans have no alternate coverage option.

“Undoing the patient protections and improved health care access would ignore the will of Congress at the expense of millions of Americans who would lose their coverage and millions more who would likely be unable to obtain coverage due to pre-existing conditions. We urge the Supreme Court to uphold the

decade-old law and preserve access to health insurance – and therefore health care—for millions of Americans.”

[Read a copy of the brief.](#)

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The groups on the brief include the American Cancer Society, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, and its division, the American Stroke Association, American Lung Association, Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Epilepsy Foundation, Hemophilia Federation of America, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, March of Dimes, Muscular Dystrophy Association, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, National Hemophilia Foundation, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Organization for Rare Disorders, National Patient Advocate Foundation, and the Kennedy Forum.