



1000 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1825  
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March 22, 2017

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Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McCarthy, and  
Minority Whip Hoyer:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the medical specialty association representing over 37,000 psychiatric physicians and their patients, we write to express opposition to H.R. 1628, the American Health Care Act (AHCA). Regrettably, the underlying legislation and the manager's amendment offered earlier this week will have a substantial negative impact on individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders, and it will precipitate a significant erosion in coverage and meaningful access to evidence-based mental health and substance use services.

Mental illness is widely prevalent in the United States. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 68 million Americans experienced a psychiatric or substance use disorder in the past year. For these individuals and others, robust insurance coverage of evidence-based care is imperative to achieve better health outcomes and lower long-term costs. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that 24 million fewer Americans would have coverage by 2026 if AHCA is signed into law. The CBO report and other objective analyses clearly show that this legislation is moving the country in the wrong direction.

APA is not supportive of the changes to Medicaid and Medicaid financing contained within AHCA. As you know, Medicaid is the nation's single largest payer for behavioral health services, accounting for 26 percent of all behavioral health spending. Unraveling the expansion of Medicaid coverage threatens the 1.3 million Americans with serious mental illness and the 2.8 million Americans with substance use disorders who gained coverage for the first time under the expansion. Furthermore, the Medicaid financing provisions contained within AHCA will eliminate the current requirement that states cover mental health services, and reduce overall Medicaid funding by \$880 million, or 25 percent over 10 years. Given that 14 million, or 20 percent of Medicaid enrollees live with mental illness

or substance use disorders, these provisions collectively threaten the ability of millions of Americans to seek or continue necessary care.

APA is also not supportive of certain reforms to private insurance coverage that potentially stand to affect individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders disproportionately. These include refundable tax credits that are on average significantly less generous than the current subsidies available for premium support, and hefty premium surcharges for failing to maintain continuous coverage.

Over the past several years, APA has applauded your efforts to advance groundbreaking legislation that made significant improvements towards meeting the needs of Americans with serious mental illness and/or addiction use disorders. Unfortunately, H.R. 1628 threatens to undermine many of those improvements, and set the country back in terms of promoting meaningful access to evidence-based care – meaningful access that has shown demonstrated savings in long-term costs.

The APA stands ready as a resource to you on developing new legislation that further enhances coverage and access to lifesaving care.

Sincerely,



Maria A. Oquendo, M.D., Ph.D  
President  
American Psychiatric Association



Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A.  
CEO and Medical Director  
American Psychiatric Association