

Harold P. Wimmer
National President and CEO

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Dear Representative:

On behalf of more than 32 million Americans with lung disease, I am writing to share the American Lung Association's perspective on H.R. 1628, the American Health Care Act of 2017 (AHCA). The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. Lung disease is the third leading cause of death in the United States and lung cancer is the leading cancer killer among both women and men. Quality, affordable healthcare is vital to all people with lung disease.

While we appreciate that the AHCA preserves important patient protections on preexisting conditions, lifetime and annual caps, we are deeply troubled that the bill threatens access to affordable healthcare and preventative services that can improve the health of Americans. We urge you to prioritize patient protections and preventative care. Any reform measure must support a health care system that provides affordable, accessible, and adequate health coverage and preserves the coverage provided to millions through Medicare and Medicaid. The AHCA, as drafted, did not achieve the needs of lung disease patients and we were very disappointed that the Manager's amendment fails to address our concerns and the needs of people with or at risk for lung disease.

Health care coverage increased for millions of Americans with chronic diseases under current law. The greatest gains in coverage for those with chronic diseases were in states that expanded Medicaid. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 14 million more people will become uninsured in 2018 and 24 million more people will become uninsured in 2024 under the American Health Care Act as originally introduced. Quality and affordable health care coverage is important for everyone, but even more so for those living with lung disease. More than 32 million Americans have some kind of lung disease— asthma, COPD, lung cancer, pulmonary fibrosis, sarcoidosis or others. These Americans living with lung disease rely on health care coverage to access lifesaving treatment. Without health care coverage and access to affordable lifesaving treatment, people with lung disease will suffer.

The American Health Care Act proposal to convert federal financing of Medicaid to a per capita cap system will reduce federal funding for Medicaid and may force states to make up the difference with their own funds or cut their programs

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by reducing the number of people they service and the health benefits they receive. The switch would potentially cost-shift \$116 billion in spending to states by 2027. The increased budget burden would cause states to likely cut eligibility and cause many low-income people to lose their Medicaid coverage. The initial Congressional Budget Office score estimates the Medicaid program will be cut by \$880 billion over the 2017-2026 period and 5 million people would lose Medicaid coverage in 2018 alone, with numbers increasing to 14 million between 2020 and 2024. Medicaid is a crucial source of coverage for 68 million low-income patients, especially those with lung disease.

Many lung diseases can be prevented by quitting smoking and receiving influenza and pneumonia vaccinations as recommended. The American Health Care Act would repeal funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund and threaten critical public health initiatives and interventions for lung disease that prevent disease and lower healthcare costs. It is essential to maintain support for prevention. Americans eligible under Medicaid Expansion smoke at higher rates than their non-Medicaid Expansion counterparts, and as a result are more likely to be at risk for developing lung cancer. This population will be deeply affected by cuts to vital services such as lung cancer screening and tobacco cessation programs, which reduce their risk of dying from lung cancer. Cutting these interventions and preventative services will result in poor health outcomes, and will translate into higher costs that will likely be increasingly borne by the states.

The American Lung Association recognizes that ensuring access to affordable healthcare and preventive services is a cornerstone of any measure to improve the health of Americans. The American Lung Association supports measures to prevent lung disease, reduce the incidence and exacerbation of lung disease, improve the diagnosis and treatment for those living with lung disease, and increase patient access to appropriate health care. The American Health Care Act does not meet the Lung Association's criteria for quality and affordable health care for Americans living with lung disease. The American Health Care Act would decrease health care coverage, cause significant cost-shifting to states, and eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund. These actions would result in poor health outcomes and higher costs increasingly borne by states.

We urge you to vote no on H.R. 1628 the American Health Care Act when it comes to the floor this week and instead work with all stakeholders, especially patient organizations to craft legislation that meets the needs of all Americans.

Sincerely,



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