

January 6, 2017

The Hon. Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As a physician, like my colleagues, I took the Hippocratic Oath when I graduated from medical school. The essential tenant of that oath is, “do no harm.” As president of the 16,000 members of the American Thoracic Society, I ask you to abide by the “do no harm” spirit of the Hippocratic Oath as Congress considers repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Our patient population is the millions of people across the US with respiratory diseases, critical illnesses and sleep disorders such as asthma, COPD, pneumonia, sepsis and obstructive sleep apnea.

Despite its potential flaws, enactment of the ACA has brought measurable improvements to the health of the American public, including expanding health insurance to over 20 million previously uninsured Americans. Previously uninsured Americans now enjoy improved financial security and access to preventative services, routine care and peace of mind knowing they are covered in the event of an accident or serious illness.

But the ACA benefits do not stop there. As a physician at a major medical center, I know that the amount of unreimbursed care provided by my hospital has dropped significantly since implementation of the ACA. My institution is not the only one. Hospitals, from major academic to small rural facilities, have all benefited from ACA by its ability to reduce the amount of uncompensated care provided by these facilities. These are real economic benefits enjoyed by hospitals and health clinics in every state.

As Congress considers repeal and replacement, I urge you to consider several important points. First, do not repeal the ACA until Congress has adopted an effective replacement plan. Repealing the ACA without enacting a detailed replacement system will destabilize the U.S. health care market, causing irreparable harm on patients, providers and health care facilities.



Second, “do no harm” to patients who have received health insurance under ACA. All Americans who received health insurance through the ACA - be it through Medicaid expansion, state or federal health insurance exchanges, or through enrollment on their parents plan - should retain their health insurance during the transition to the new system and after the new system is fully implemented. We further request that low and middle income Americans continue to receive appropriate assistance to ensure that their health insurance is comprehensive and affordable, including deductibles and copays. The health and financial security of over 20 million Americans is too important for Congress to dismiss in the rush to fulfill campaign promises.

Third, retain what is best about the ACA, including private insurance market reforms, that;

- Prohibit pre-existing condition exclusions
- Eliminate annual and life-time benefit caps
- The ability for young adults to stay on their parent’s health insurance plan
- Place limits on risk adjustments for various populations
- Ensure coverage of evidence-based essential health services, including access to specialty care, diagnosis and treatment services
- Enable coverage of evidence-based preventative services without copays or deductibles

The ATS looks forward to working with Congress to improve our health care system and ensure health insurance coverage for all Americans. Please contact Nuala S. Moore, Associate Director of Government Relations at Nmoore@thoracic.org or (202) 296.9770. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David Gozal, M.D., MBA
President
American Thoracic Society



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1150 18th Street, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20036
T. 202-296-9770 F. 202 296-9776 | thoracic.org

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