



## International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses

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March 17, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Chair  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady  
Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal  
Ranking Member  
Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Walden and Brady, Ranking Members Pallone and Neal:

Representing the interests of our nation's and global Psychiatric Nurses and Nurse Practitioner members, the International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses (ISPN) joining our colleagues the American Nurses Association (ANA) respectfully wish to express its opposition to the recently released American Health Care Act (AHCA) as written.

One in five Americans experiences a mental health condition, but only half get needed treatment. Coverage for mental health care helps people get treatment when they need it, helping them to stay in school, on the job and in recovery. But the American Health Care Act (AHCA) would reduce funding for health coverage—from insurance plans to Medicaid—and put mental health care at risk. It caps Medicaid funding, which will lead to deep cuts and jeopardize mental health services. Nearly 1 out of 3 people covered by Medicaid expansion live with a mental health or substance use condition. This bill would end new enrollment in 2020, leaving people with mental health and substance use conditions without the Medicaid services they need.

The American Health Care Act threatens health care affordability, access, and delivery for individuals across the nation especially for those with mental disorders and addictions. In its current form, the bill changes Medicaid to a per capita cap funding model, eliminates the Prevention and Public Health Fund, restricts millions of mentally ill from access to critical health services, and repeals income based subsidies that American citizens rely on. Medicaid expansion plans would no longer have to cover mental health and substance use care, abandoning Congress' commitment to mental health and substance use coverage.

People covered by Medicaid expansion before 2020 would be dropped from their plan if they have a lapse of coverage of more than a month. For people with mental health and substance use disorders, this is a high price to pay for forgetting to pay a premium while someone is in the hospital or experiencing severe symptoms. These changes in no way will improve care for the American people.

Congress should not put millions of Americans with mental illness at risk. Cutting corners in health coverage will keep people from getting the treatment they need and will push people with mental illness into costly emergency rooms, hospitals and jails. Investing early in affordable, quality mental health care promotes recovery and saves taxpayer dollars in the long term by avoiding disability, criminal justice involvement and frequent hospital stays.

ISPN also remains troubled by the absence of testimony from non-partisan experts, such as the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC), the Medicare Payment Advisory Committee (MedPAC) or the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Input from these and other non-partisan experts would shed light on the potential long-term economic and health consequences of the legislation. Any legislation that would fundamentally alter health-care delivery and deeply impact patients and providers deserves thoughtful, deliberate and transparent consideration. ISPN strongly urges Congress to take time and carefully weigh both the short and long term consequences, allow opportunity for considered public and stakeholder feedback in the face of reforms that would have a far-reaching and personal impact on the lives of millions of people.

Psychiatric nurses work in virtually every health care setting helping persons of all ages with critically debilitating mental and substance use issues. They provide expert, compassionate care for people throughout all stages of life. We ask Congress to keep our patients' access to affordable, quality care foremost and not decrease access for millions who are now covered.

ISPN stands ready to work with Congress as a constructive voice and positive force for improving health care delivery, coverage, and affordability for the American people.

Sincerely,



Rene Love, PhD, DNP, PMHNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP  
President  
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses

cc: The Honorable Speaker Paul Ryan  
The Honorable Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable Majority Leader Mitch McConnell  
The Honorable Minority Leader Charles Schumer  
The Honorable Lamar Alexander Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
The Honorable Patty Murray Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee  
The Honorable Orrin Hatch Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Ron Wyden Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee