

January 3, 2017

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

As organizations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children, adolescents, and pregnant women, we urge you to keep the unique needs of children in mind as you consider the future of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and ensure that any changes do no harm to children. Thanks to Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the ACA, ninety-five percent of children in the United States have health coverage – an historic high.¹ Children must not lose ground: any health reforms must build on achievements already made to further improve coverage for children. We look forward to working with you to ensure no child is worse off as changes to our health care system are contemplated, and that we can work together to make even more progress for children.

As you consider the future of the ACA, we ask that you adhere to at least the two following principles:

Put children first and adopt a “do no harm to children” standard. Over the past 50 years, it has been clearly demonstrated that there are strong economic reasons to preserve and protect children's health coverage. The return on investment is high. Children with health coverage are more likely to attend school, graduate from high school, go to college, and become healthier adults, with higher taxable earnings than uninsured children. Identifying and treating conditions early, before they become expensive long-term liabilities, is effective. As you consider *any* changes to the Affordable Care Act, we urge you to commit to the guiding principle that these changes must not leave children worse off. Consistent with the “do no harm to children” standard it is also essential that there be no structural changes to Medicaid that would negatively impact the comprehensive and affordable coverage the program provides to children.

Any repeal of the ACA must be accompanied by passage of a full, immediate replacement that meets the needs of children and their families. A repeal without a replacement will lead to large disruptions to the health insurance market and significantly higher burdens on families and communities. Children will be directly impacted by the

repeal of affordable coverage options. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that in the absence of a replacement package, 22 million people will lose coverage by 2019. In fact, it is estimated that repealing the ACA without a full replacement would leave more people uninsured than before the ACA was passed.ⁱⁱ The American Academy of Actuaries also recently [warned](#) that delaying the effective date of repeal to give time to develop a replacement would not assure stability of the market and could result in “spiraling premiums, insurer withdrawals from the individual markets, and loss of coverage for millions of Americans.”

In addition to the four million children who would lose coverage as a result of repeal, millions more would be negatively impacted by their parents losing coverage. Research clearly shows that children are better off when their parents have health insurance coverage.ⁱⁱⁱ The disruption to the health insurance market overall and the loss of health care dollars will also impact jobs and divert important state and local resources that support other systems, such as education, that are critical to ensuring children are ready to drive our future economy.

The children’s advocacy community stands united in calling on Congress to prioritize the needs of children by protecting their coverage in *any* efforts to repeal the ACA or reform the health care system. Any attempt to repeal the ACA without immediately enacting a replacement that leaves no child worse off could jeopardize the health of our nation’s children. Under your leadership, Congress must reaffirm its commitment to ensuring a stable health care system for all Americans and build on the gains that have been won for children and families, without interruption, and without losing ground.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
Children’s Defense Fund
Children’s Dental Health Project
Children’s Hospital Association
Family Voices
First Focus
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

ⁱ Alker, J. and Chester, A., Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, “Children’s Health Coverage Rate Now at Historic High of 95 Percent,” October 2016, available at <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Kids-ACS-update-11-02-1.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Blumberg, Linda J., Matthew Buettgens, and John Holahan, “Implications of Partial Repeal of the ACA through Reconciliation.” Urban Institute, December 2016. <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/implications-partial-repeal-aca-through-reconciliation>

ⁱⁱⁱ Center for Children and Families (2014). “Medicaid Expansion: Good for Parents and Children,” Georgetown University Health Policy Institute. <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Expanding-Coverage-for-Parents-Helps-Children-2013.pdf>