

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION



Leading Children's Health Groups to United States Senate: "Vote NO on the Graham-Cassidy Health Care Repeal Bill"

September 25, 2017

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Children's Defense Fund, Children's Dental Health Project, Children's Hospital Association, Family Voices, First Focus Campaign for Children, March of Dimes and National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners issue the following joint statement voicing their strong opposition to the Graham-Cassidy health care bill given its devastating impact on children, pregnant women, families, and our nation's health care system:

Our organizations represent children, pregnant women, families, children's health care providers and advocates across the country, and we speak here with one voice to urge the U.S. Senate to keep health coverage for children strong by rejecting the Graham-Cassidy health care repeal bill.

The bill is an assault on the health and futures of our children, pregnant women, and adults and our nation. Yet the Senate is poised to run ahead to vote on the bill without a complete assessment from the Congressional Budget office on the cost of care and numbers of children, pregnant women and others who will lose coverage.

The Graham-Cassidy bill fails children by ending the Medicaid program as we know it, jeopardizing comprehensive, affordable health coverage for the 72 million vulnerable Americans, 37 million of them children, who rely on Medicaid for their health care.

Medicaid covers more than 40 percent of all children with special health care needs, roughly half of all births each year, and provides indispensable care for pregnant women. Medicaid offers comprehensive benefits many private health plans won't cover, like hearing and vision screenings, and wheelchairs and hearing aids to meet children's needs as they grow and develop. Medicaid is there for families struggling from the opioid epidemic, covering treatment for parents and services for their children, and from other disasters. Medicaid is there for families living at or near poverty and for children and youth in foster care. But if this bill passes, Medicaid will no longer be there for any of them.

The Graham-Cassidy bill fails children by leaving more families uninsured, or without insurance that meets their basic needs. It would return us to a day when insurance companies can deny essential health services, including mental health, substance abuse treatment, and maternity care, and discriminate against children and adults with pre-existing conditions. This bill's deep and growing cuts in federal funding for states — estimated to be \$4 trillion over the next twenty years — would likely result in tens of millions of adults and children losing coverage.

By focusing on passing the Graham-Cassidy bill next week, Congress is also poised to miss a *real* deadline, passage of a long-term extension of funding for the bipartisan Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by September 30, 2017. CHIP works because it is built on the strong foundation of Medicaid, and the two together have helped reduce the number of uninsured children by a remarkable 68 percent in the last 20 years. Just one week ago, a strong bipartisan bill was introduced to extend CHIP funding for five years, but now action to get CHIP over the finish line has stalled. Instead we are struggling to fight back the Graham-Cassidy bill that would dismantle rather than improve coverage for millions of children and pregnant women and also establish an enormous new block grant that threatens CHIP's unique valuable focus on maternal and child health.

Today, a record 95 percent of children in America have health coverage. Rather than build on this progress, the Graham-Cassidy bill tears it down. Our nation's children deserve health coverage that is there for them and their families. They certainly deserve better than the Graham-Cassidy bill.