

Interfaith Coalition Letter to Congress
Regarding Proposed Changes to Affordable Care Act

co-signed by Society of St. Vincent de Paul and 28 other faith based organizations
(see signatory list at bottom)

January 9, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

When Ann's health took a turn for the worse, she didn't have health insurance.

She had put off going to the doctor too long and this almost killed her. After several years of her feet turning black, she went to the clinic and was sent to the hospital, where they diagnosed her with an obstruction and an aneurysm. With what she calls her "second lease on life," Ann tells her story to make it clear that access to affordable health insurance is a matter of life and death.

Ann survived, but not all the stories we have heard in our communities of faith turned out this way. Faith communities know what it feels like to go without the security of health insurance. **As organizations representing people of various faith traditions, we urge you not to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) unless there is an equitable and sensible replacement in the same legislation.** There are many things we can do to improve and fix the ACA, but repealing parts of the law through reconciliation without a simultaneous replacement would put millions of people in the type of fear and danger Ann faced.

The scriptures of the Abrahamic traditions of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, in addition to the sacred teachings of other faiths, understand that addressing the general welfare of the nation includes giving particular attention to people experiencing poverty or sickness. Toward that end, people of faith have worked both individually and collectively to move our nation toward a more inclusive and just system of healthcare – with a particular focus on people whose health conditions or low income have created barriers to receiving needed care. A hasty decision to repeal the ACA before any replacement plan is ready would not only set our country back, but also cause untold suffering, disruption, and anxiety in the lives of millions of Americans who have gained coverage through the ACA. This is bad for their health and the health of our nation.

Repealing only the fiscal parts of the ACA through reconciliation could leave up to 29.8 million additional people without health insurance.¹ This loss of coverage would place hardship and financial difficulty onto millions of Americans and likely lead to thousands of avoidable deaths. Even if Congress votes in January 2017 to delay the repeal, the uncertainty of having no replacement plan will cause chaos in the insurance market and anxiety for the millions who will lose coverage. As people of various faith traditions, we come together to urge you to be concerned for those who would lose access to affordable health insurance and care.

¹ Urban Institute: "the number of uninsured people would rise from 28.9 million to 58.7 million in 2019, an increase of 29.8 million people (103 percent)."

http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/86236/2001013-the-implications-of-partial-repeal-of-the-aca-through-reconciliation_0.pdf

Our concerns are neither political nor ideological. Faith communities are committed to a faith-inspired moral vision of healthcare that offers health, wholeness, and human dignity for all. We see millions of people who may be harmed by repeal without a replacement because they are currently experiencing the benefits of recent health reforms:

- Children with pre-existing conditions who can no longer be excluded from coverage on their parents' health insurance
- Young adults who now have coverage on their parents' policies
- Senior adults who have received rebates for prescription drugs that had to be purchased once they reached the coverage gap; and senior adults who are now receiving annual preventive care check-ups with no out-of-pocket expenses
- Women who can no longer be charged higher premiums because of their gender, and who are receiving mammograms and pap smears with no out of pocket expenses.
- Low-income working families living on up to 133% of the federal poverty level who have access to health care in states that have expanded Medicaid
- Persons with cancer and other serious medical conditions who will no longer be denied coverage by insurers; and persons who can no longer be dropped from coverage when they get sick
- Middle-income families without employer-sponsored insurance who will have subsidies to help purchase affordable insurance in the new exchanges (marketplaces)

For people in our communities, political ideology is far less important than the life or death matter of access to affordable healthcare. We people of faith and our members throughout the country urge you to continue guiding us toward a moral vision of a U.S. health care system that is inclusive, affordable, accessible, and accountable.

Repealing the ACA without a replacement plan would not bring us closer to this moral vision, but would instead endanger the security and rights of millions of American people. People in our communities are counting on you to proceed with caution, prudence, and care. We urge you to first provide a replacement plan that would protect their coverage and dignity before you vote to repeal a program they count on. Partisan politics should not triumph over the needs of the truly vulnerable in our nation.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists
Bread for the World
Center of Concern
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Church World Service
Disciples Center for Public Witness, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Menonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Missionary Oblates JPIC Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Office of Social Justice; Christian Reformed Church in North America
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Religious Institute
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Leadership Team
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church: General Board of Church and Society
Women of Reform Judaism