



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2017

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign's 2 million members and supporters nationwide, I write to express our opposition to the American Health Care Act, the proposed plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As the nation's largest civil rights organization working to promote equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people, we are deeply concerned about the negative impact that the American Health Care Act would have on communities such as ours that already face systemic discrimination and healthcare disparities.

Prior to implementation of the ACA, LGBTQ people had some of the lowest insurance rates of any population in the country. The individual market reforms, including the ban on preexisting conditions, have made it possible for many in our community to obtain health insurance for the first time in their lives. In particular, the Medicaid expansion has helped to improve coverage rates among low-income LGB people by eight percent. In addition, tens of thousands of people living with HIV have qualified for care and treatment under the Medicaid expansion, gaining access to life-saving treatments before becoming disabled by the virus. As a result, people living with HIV are able to have healthier and longer lives.

The American Health Care Act will have a detrimental impact on health coverage for LGBTQ people and so many other vulnerable populations. The Congressional Budget Office has projected that the provisions of the legislation will result in 14 million Americans losing their health insurance by 2018. That number skyrockets to 24 million by 2026. These projections foreshadow an unacceptable growth in health care disparity, rather than improved access to healthcare, for thousands of LGBTQ individuals if this legislation is enacted.

The American Health Care Act fundamentally changes the health safety-net program we know as Medicaid, imposing a per capita cap funding structure that is estimated to cut \$880 billion in federal funding from state Medicaid programs. The magnitude of the lost funding will have a swift, stark, and devastating impact on the most vulnerable among us: women and children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and persons living with HIV. The legislation also strips the requirement to cover essential health benefits under the Medicaid expansion leaving millions without access to the critical benefit they have come to rely on, including substance abuse treatment and mental healthcare services.

The American Health Care Act's refundable tax credits, which would not be adjusted for income or geographic variation in premiums, would put healthcare coverage out of reach for most

people with HIV. These individuals, and others in the gap years before Medicare eligibility, could be charged up to five times more than young adults for their coverage. Expanding the role of health savings accounts would do little to help many people with HIV and other low-income individuals living paycheck to paycheck with little or no savings.

Finally, the legislation goes beyond the parameters of the ACA, slashing funding to Planned Parenthood and its affiliated clinics. This will jeopardize their ability to deliver preventive healthcare services, such as HIV testing and transition-related care. Often, health centers such as Planned Parenthood offer the only culturally competent healthcare available, especially in rural and isolated areas. Rather than improving care options, this would disproportionately impact people who already face structural barriers to accessing care including people of color, immigrants, young people, and members of the LGBTQ community. Eliminating the Public Health and Prevention Fund will undercut local capacity building critical to detect and respond to infectious diseases, such as hepatitis C and HIV, and other public health threats. Abandoning this critical investment will set back public health and security.

The American Health Care Act, drafted behind closed doors and without public input, is a flawed proposal that turns a blind eye on millions of Americans and would deny them the health benefits they have come to rely upon. We strongly urge all members to reject this harmful legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Stacy".

David Stacy
Government Affairs Director