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July 25, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association Practice Organization (APAPO), we are writing to express our strong opposition to any health care legislation that results in more Americans without health insurance, and that drastically cuts and fundamentally alters the Medicaid program, the foundation of our nation's social safety net.

The Senate should act as a deliberative body by carefully, transparently, and thoroughly evaluating proposals to reshape the U.S. health care system. Instead, as we write this, it is unclear if Senators will be voting on the American Health Care Act, as passed by the House of Representatives; the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 (as initially introduced on June 26th, as amended and released on July 13th, or as amended and released on July 20th); the Obamacare Repeal Reconciliation Act of 2017, legislation that would repeal major provisions of the Affordable Care Act without attempting to replace them; or on some yet unseen version of any of these.

We strongly urge you to vote against any of these bills or any legislation that would cause such long-lasting harm to the American public. All of the health care bills listed above would:

- Cause at least 22 million people to lose their insurance, relative to current law, by 2026. An estimated 32 million more people would be without health insurance under a “repeal only” bill;
- Cut at least \$750 billion from the Medicaid program over the next ten years, reducing spending by 26% or more by 2026 relative to current law, and leaving the program unable to respond effectively to demographic changes in the beneficiary population and public health emergencies;
- Sharply increase premiums and deductibles for many in the individual health insurance market, particularly older and less healthy Americans, while simultaneously cutting total federal premium assistance support and cost-sharing assistance payments by hundreds of billions of dollars;

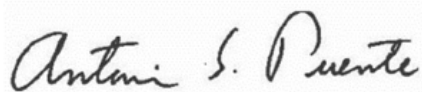
- Eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund, and restrict access to reproductive health care and other vital health services.

The legislation's Medicaid cuts are particularly egregious. Medicaid is a core component of our nation's mental health service delivery system, and the drastic Medicaid cuts contained in the legislation would seriously curtail efforts to address our nation's opioid crisis. The damage caused would far outweigh the benefits of a greatly inadequate \$45 billion grant fund for substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services, as proposed in one version of the Better Care Reconciliation Act. While additional funding for addiction research and for developing treatment and recovery programs is needed, this must be considered as an *addition to* the safety net of Medicaid coverage for those with substance use disorders. Similarly, while some have proposed adding \$200 billion in funding to the legislation to help former Medicaid beneficiaries buy private health insurance, the legislation would still cut at least half a trillion dollars out of Medicaid over the next decade, with even deeper cuts in the following decade and beyond.


All three versions of the Better Care Reconciliation Act would allow states to waive the requirement that health plans cover a package of essential health benefits, including coverage of mental health and substance use disorder services, and behavioral health treatment. We are staunchly opposed to any such waiver authority, since mental health and substance use disorders are the leading cause of disease burden in the U.S., and since more than 2 million Americans are struggling with opioid or heroin addiction.

We urge Senators to vote against any legislation that includes these provisions and would reduce, not increase, the number of Americans with effective, reliable coverage for mental health and substance use treatment. Instead, Congress should go back to the drawing board and work in a bipartisan fashion to strengthen the Affordable Care Act and the individual insurance market. It is imperative that legislation arising from this effort extend comprehensive, reliable health insurance coverage—including coverage for mental health and substance use treatment—to the 28 million currently uninsured Americans.

Sincerely,



Antonio E. Puente, PhD
President



Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD
Chief Executive Officer

cc: United States Senate