

## Save the Lives of People with HIV: Vote NO on the “Better Care Reconciliation Act”

June 27, 2017

U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The undersigned 144 organizations are writing with an urgent request for you to **reject the Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 on behalf of the 22 million Americans estimated to lose coverage, including hundreds of thousands of individuals with HIV, if the bill is enacted.** We are national, state, and local organizations representing people living with HIV and vulnerable to HIV, public health and medical providers, HIV/AIDS service organizations, housing providers, and advocates from across the United States.

The BCRA would return America to a time when healthcare coverage was out of reach for too many people with HIV. The bill would cut billions of dollars from healthcare programs and offset billions of dollars through tax cuts, by retreating on the federal commitment to the Medicaid Program; phasing out of the Medicaid expansion; eroding key consumer protections that ensure access to essential services; reducing premium assistance for lower income individuals; and ending cost sharing assistance. Together these changes would be devastating to many people with HIV who would be left without affordable healthcare coverage options and would reverse recent gains in reducing HIV incidence and improving outcomes.

We oppose the BCRA because it will:

- **Severely Weaken the Ability of the Medicaid Program to Respond to the Needs of People with HIV and Millions of Others who Count on It for Lifesaving Care.** Forty-two percent of individuals with HIV rely on the Medicaid program for access to healthcare. Either a per capita cap or block grant would leave states ill-equipped to respond to rising drug costs, curative break-through treatments for hepatitis C, natural disasters or public health crises, such as the 2015 HIV and hepatitis C outbreak affecting nearly 200 residents in Scott County, Indiana within a 12-month period.<sup>1</sup> The per capita cap or block grant would abandon the federal government’s commitment to supporting healthcare access for our nation’s low income children, adults, seniors and disabled.
- **Leave Millions Worse Off by Phasing Out the Medicaid Expansion.** Prior to the Affordable Care Act, the majority of people with HIV did not qualify for Medicaid coverage, no matter how poor they were, until they became sick and disabled by AIDS. In the 31 states and the District of Columbia that expanded Medicaid coverage, the ACA ended this cruel irony by providing access to the healthcare and medications that help to prevent disability in people with HIV.
- **Make Healthcare Coverage and Services Unaffordable:** While the BCRA maintains a similar premium assistance structure to the ACA, eligibility will be capped at a lower income level and the assistance will be pegged to a lower value plan leading to much higher deductibles and unaffordable out-of-pocket costs for many people with HIV. People with HIV and others living on low incomes are living paycheck to paycheck and have little or no savings. In addition, as the population living with HIV ages, consumers must be protected from age rating that prices out insurance coverage for older Americans. Alternatives

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<sup>1</sup>CROI 2017. *The Evolving Epidemiology of HIV Infection in Persons Who Inject Drugs: Indiana 2015.* John Brooks.

such as Health Savings Accounts will do little to make up for increased premium expenses and the elimination of cost sharing subsidies.

- **Leave People with HIV and Millions of Others without Coverage that Will Meet Their Basic Medical Needs.** Allowing states to waive the Essential Health Benefits that ensures access to key service categories, including prescription drugs, mental health and substance use treatment and preventive services will result in people with HIV and others paying more for coverage that does not meet their basic medical needs.
- **Provide Inadequate Funding to Stabilize the Individual Insurance Market and Give States the Flexibility to Create High Risk Pools:** The Patient and State Stability fund that is intended to stabilize markets and keep costs down in states that waive community rating for health status is woefully underfunded and will be insufficient to ensure affordable premiums for individuals with chronic conditions. In addition, State High Risk Pools, one of the options available to the states with the funding, have largely failed people with HIV in the past due to their high out-of-pocket costs and restricted benefits. We strongly support stabilizing the individual market through reinsurance in communities, many in rural areas, where the number of potential enrollees has been insufficient to support a competitive environment but not as a substitute for re-introducing discriminatory practices to the individual insurance market.
- **Defund Planned Parenthood:** Planned Parenthood offers people of all genders essential sexual health services, including STD screening and treatment, HIV and hepatitis C testing and linkage to care services, and HIV preventative services. Planned Parenthood clinics are the sole source for HIV and hepatitis C testing in many rural communities as was the case in Scott County, Indiana where following the closure of the local Planned Parenthood clinic the 2015 HIV outbreak occurred.
- **Eliminate the Prevention & Public Health Fund:** This funding is critical to building local capacity 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.

We cannot afford to go back to the pre-ACA sick care system that focused on treating disability and disease rather than preventing it. Please work to improve and build upon rather than dismantle health care reforms that have benefited millions of Americans, including hundreds of thousands living with HIV.

Respectfully submitted by the 144 undersigned organizations,

**Alabama**

AIDS Alabama  
AIDS Alabama South, LLC  
Collaborative Solutions  
Medical Advocacy and Outreach  
Southern AIDS Coalition  
Thrive Alabama  
Unity Wellness Center

**Arizona**

Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation

**Arkansas**

Jefferson Comprehensive Care System, Inc.

**California**

AIDS Legal Referral Panel of San Francisco  
AIDS Services Foundation Orange County  
APLA Health  
Equality California  
HIV ACCESS  
Lambda Legal  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
Project Angel Food  
Project Inform

Sacramento LGBT Community Center  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation

**Colorado**

Boulder Valley Women's Health Center  
Rocky Mountain CARES

**Connecticut**

AIDS Project New Haven

**District of Columbia (DC)**

ADAP Advocacy Association (aaa+)  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth and Families  
AIDS United  
Allies for Independence  
American Academy of HIV Medicine  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
CAEAR Coalition  
Community Access National Network (CANN)  
Food & Friends  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality  
HealthHIV  
Human Rights Campaign  
National AIDS Housing Coalition

National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors  
 National Association of County and City Health Officials  
 National Center for Transgender Equality  
 National Coalition for LGBT Health  
 National Coalition of STD Directors  
 National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
 NMAC  
 Out2Enroll  
 Positive Women's Network – USA  
 Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)  
 The AIDS Institute  
 The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable

#### **Florida**

CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
 Hope and Help Center of Central Florida, Inc.  
 Northeast Florida AIDS Network  
 The Poverello Center, Inc  
 Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS)

#### **Georgia**

AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta  
 Georgia AIDS Coalition  
 Georgia Equality  
 HIV Dental Alliance

Positive IMPACT Health Centers  
 SisterLove

#### **Illinois**

AIDS Foundation Chicago  
 Chicago House and Social Service Agency  
 Chicago Women's AIDS Project  
 Children's Place Association  
 Legal Council for Health Justice  
 Open Door Center of IL  
 Open Door Clinic of Greater Elgin  
 Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center  
 Test Positive Aware Network

#### **Indiana**

Meals on Wheels of Central Indiana

#### **Kansas**

Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita

#### **Kentucky**

Matthew 25 AIDS Services, Inc.

#### **Louisiana**

CrescentCare

#### **Maine**

Consumers for Affordable Health Care

#### **Maryland**

African American Health Alliance  
 AIDS Action Baltimore  
 Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition

#### **Massachusetts**

AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts  
 Community Servings  
 The Fenway Institute

John Snow, Inc. (JSI)  
 Treatment Access Expansion Project

#### **Michigan**

AL GAMEA  
 CARES of Southwest Michigan  
 Health Emergency Lifeline Programs  
 HIV/AIDS Alliance of Michigan  
 Michigan Positive Action Coalition  
 African American AIDS Task Force

#### **Minnesota**

Clare Housing  
 Hope House of St Croix Valley  
 Minnesota AIDS Project  
 Rainbow Health Initiative  
 The Aliveness Project  
 Youth and AIDS Projects

#### **Mississippi**

Mississippi Center for Justice

#### **Missouri**

Saint Louis Effort for AIDS

#### **Nevada**

Northern Nevada HOPES  
 Southern Nevada Health District

#### **New Jersey**

Buddies of New Jersey, Inc.  
 New Jersey Association on Correction

#### **New York**

Amida Care  
 Creations 4 Empowerment  
 God's Love We Deliver  
 Harm Reduction Coalition  
 Hispanic Health Network  
 Housing Works  
 Latino Commission on AIDS  
 National Latino AIDS Action Network  
 NYTAG (New York Transgender Advocacy Group)  
 Prevention Access Campaign  
 Southern Tier AIDS Program  
 Treatment Action Group

#### **VillageCare**

#### **North Carolina**

NC AIDS Action Network  
 Piedmont Health Services & Sickle Cell Agency  
 Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative

#### **Ohio**

ADAP Educational Initiative  
 Equitas Health  
 Miami Valley Positives for Positives  
 Silver Creek Strategies

#### **Oklahoma**

Tulsa CARES

#### **Oregon**

Cascade AIDS Project  
 OHSU/Partnership Project

#### **Pennsylvania**

AIDS Resource Alliance  
 Association of Nurses in AIDS Care

GIRL U CAN DO IT, INC.

MANNA (Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance)

**Tennessee**

(TAPWA) Tennessee Association Of People With AIDS

CHOICES. Memphis Center for Reproductive Health

Friends For Life

Nashville CARES

Street Works

**Texas**

AIDS Arms, Inc. d/b/a Prism Health North Texas

Legacy Community Health

National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network

Program for Wellness Restoration

Resource Center

Valley AIDS Council

**Virginia**

Blue Ridge Independent Living Center

HIV Medicine Association

Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition

**Washington**

Pierce County AIDS Foundation (PCAF)

**West Virginia**

CAMC Ryan White Part C HIV Program

South Central Educational Development, Inc.

**Wisconsin**

AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin