



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

January 4, 2017

U.S. Congress
Washington, DC

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write in strong opposition to any legislation to repeal or otherwise weaken the Affordable Care Act. Any effort to repeal the ACA without ensuring a viable and immediate replacement plan is unconscionable and will put the health of the American people at an unacceptable risk. Any replacement plan must ensure that individuals who have gained health insurance coverage under the ACA will maintain their coverage and maintain access to the other important benefits created under this critical public health law. In addition, it must also address the additional millions of Americans that remain without quality affordable health insurance coverage.

The ACA is critical to addressing the biggest challenges facing our health system including the rising costs associated with our health care system, uneven quality of care, deaths due to medical errors, discriminatory practices by health insurance providers and the shrinking ranks of the nation's primary care providers. The ACA is helping to shift our health system from one that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy.

Under the law, millions of previously uninsured Americans now have affordable and comprehensive health insurance coverage through the health insurance marketplaces as well as through the expansion of the Medicaid program, significantly reducing the uninsured rate. Repeal of the provisions in the law outlined in this legislation without a viable replacement, would result in nearly 30 million Americans losing their health insurance coverage. An estimated 82 percent of those losing insurance would be from working families. We would also see an increase in health disparities – the uninsured rate among African Americans would increase from 11 percent to 20 percent in 2019 and from 14 percent to 26 percent for American Indian/Alaskan Natives. A loss of health insurance can also be expected to translate into more premature deaths.

In addition to providing coverage for millions who were previously uninsured, the law provides nearly 138 million individuals, including millions of children, with access to preventive health care services such as vaccines, disease screenings, well-child visits and tobacco cessation counseling without co-pays or deductibles through private health insurance. Thirty nine million seniors have also accessed preventive services without cost through the Medicare program. Millions of young adults up to age 26 are able to stay on their parents' health insurance plans and nearly 129 million individuals with pre-existing conditions are protected from insurance coverage denials.

The ACA provides critical mandatory funding through the Prevention and Public Health Fund for community-based prevention and public health activities. The fund has already provided more than \$6 billion to support a variety of public health activities in every state including tracking and preventing infectious disease, community and clinical prevention programs, bolstering the public health infrastructure and workforce and expanding access to childhood immunizations. The fund makes up a substantial portion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's budget, which remains relatively flat compared with FY 2010 and significantly below 2010 levels when adjusted for inflation. In 2016, Congress allocated more than \$892 million of the fund to CDC – more than 12 percent of the agency's annual budget. Loss of this funding would be devastating to the CDC, our nation's top public health agency and ultimately to the American people.

Protecting the ACA and working to effectively implement this critical law to protect and improve the health of the American people will remain a top priority for APHA and our 50,000 members, and we will consider including any vote to repeal or weaken this historic law in our 2017 annual congressional vote record that is shared with our membership.

We ask you to oppose any effort to repeal the ACA and we look forward to working with you to create the healthiest nation in one generation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Georges" and last name "Benjamin" clearly legible.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director