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PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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New Jersey Federal Delegation Members
United States Senate / House of Representatives

Twenty-two million Americans and 800,000 New Jersey residents are covered by the Affordable Care Act. There is far too much at stake to rush through a bill that has not been thoroughly analyzed and has not been scored and fiscally reviewed by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. That's why the New Jersey Hospital Association, with 400 members representing the second-largest jobs sector in our state, cannot support the American Health Care Act. A wrong step could threaten access to affordable care for millions and destabilize the healthcare system that cares for all of us.

Let's remember the people who would be affected by this law – senior citizens who are dual eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare. The disabled. The working poor who hold jobs but can't afford healthcare on their own. Children and families who are below poverty level. It's a broad cross section of our families and neighbors.

Perhaps the largest worry in this bill is the dramatic redesign of Medicaid as we know it. Freezing the Medicaid expansion population would force a spike in the number of uninsured in New Jersey – harkening back to the pre-ACA days when greater than one in every 10 New Jersey residents lacked health insurance. This poses a unique problem in New Jersey where all hospitals are required by state law to provide care to all, regardless of their ability to pay. If this bill as expected increases the number of uninsured in our state, our hospitals will face an even deeper unfunded obligation in caring for the uninsured. Coupled with a per-capita cap with funding stuck at 2016 levels, the burden-shift to states would be tremendous, impacting both taxpayers and healthcare providers that have already sustained hundreds of millions in state funding cuts in the years since the ACA was enacted.

From a policy perspective, true coverage – and not just access to safety net services – is essential for an efficient healthcare system. Those with health insurance have access to a primary care doctor and preventive care under that coverage. It would be a very harmful step backward if New Jersey residents lost coverage and returned to the days when they used the hospital emergency room for all of their healthcare. That's not right on a human level, and just not a smart way to deliver healthcare services.

We also have concerns about the tax provisions included in the bill. While repealing many of the tax provisions that benefit high earners, the measure leaves intact the taxes, and funding cuts, that hurt healthcare providers. We also worry that replacing insurance subsidies with tax credits will not help the poor who most need help in making health insurance affordable and within reach.

With far too many unknowns, this bill is risky to the health of New Jersey residents now covered under the ACA – as well as to a sector that represents 17 percent of our nation's gross domestic product. We urge you to give this important issue sufficient review, analysis and vetting to avoid unintended consequences that could carry grave costs for years to come. And we remain eager to assist you as a resource on the many complex issues confronting healthcare providers and their patients.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth A. Ryan", is written over a thin horizontal line.

Elizabeth A. Ryan, Esq.