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PRESIDENT AND  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

April 26, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

In light of the recent introduction of new amendments to the American Health Care Act, the New Jersey Hospital Association remains firmly opposed to this legislation. While we can all agree that the Affordable Care Act is imperfect, the newest amendments do nothing to address the major concerns we have about threats to coverage for New Jersey residents – and in fact, they raise additional worries about key consumer protections. In short, the newest amendments make an already bad bill worse.

In giving states the flexibility to waive many of the patient protections under the ACA, the MacArthur amendment would create a system of tiered states. The State of New Jersey has a long history of providing robust protections for our patients, and we were pleased to see the ACA create a similar floor for the entire country. The waiving of essential health benefits would affect not only Marketplace enrollees but also all private market plans. For the vast majority of Americans who receive employer-based coverage, these waivers have real consequences.

By allowing states to eliminate the ACA's community rating provision, individuals with preexisting conditions could be charged whatever amount insurance companies deemed appropriate. The idea of "invisible high risk pools" is just that – an idea. Putting people's lives and livelihoods at stake to try something with little track record is too risky.

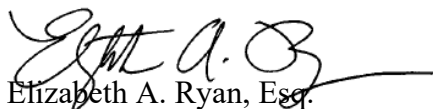
The amendment would give states license to create bare bones plans that charge unwieldy rates to those based on their health status. That is why they also included language in the amendment to protect all congressional staff from these state waivers. If the coverage provided under the AHCA is not suitable for young, healthy Hill staffers, we question why it would be good enough for the rest of the individuals that our members care for 24/7/365.

Furthermore, the waiver process would have default approval with 60 days of submission to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This eliminates any sense of checks and balances and allows zero accountability to Secretary Price or the Administration. State flexibility is desirable, but free rein is unrealistic and potentially dangerous.

Additionally, the new amendments do nothing to address one of the largest flaws in the AHCA – the complete redesign of the Medicaid program. As you well know, there are 1.8 million New Jersey lives covered by the Medicaid program – with children making up the largest percentage of enrollees. The AHCA would fundamentally change the Medicaid program by instating a per capita cap model. With states like New Jersey already feeling tremendous fiscal pressure, the costs of providing care would be passed to providers, hospitals and health systems.

Lastly, we continue to call on Congress to wait for a new CBO score before voting on the amended AHCA. While the MacArthur amendments might have appeased some Members, they further reinforce what NJHA has been saying all along. The AHCA goes too far and, without time for nonpartisan economic review, too fast. The bottom line is this: Is the AHCA good for the health of New Jerseyans? We believe the answer is no, and ask you to join us in opposing this bill.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth A. Ryan, Esq.