

June 28, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Flake
2200 East Camelback Road
Suite 120
Phoenix, AZ 85016

The Honorable John McCain
2201 E Camelback Road
Suite 115
Phoenix, AZ 85016

Re: **Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) of 2017**

Dear Senator Flake and Senator McCain,

The clinicians who practice medicine in Arizona and take care of patients are writing to you to express our concern about the BCRA legislation that the Senate will be considering soon.

We, the leaders of the listed Arizona state medical organizations, have come together to request that you oppose the BCRA bill, as it would have a negative impact on the healthcare of Arizonans by cutting eligibility, coverage and access to care for the most vulnerable individuals in our state. As leaders of our professional societies, we have taken an oath to advocate for our patients and to protect them from harm.

As you are aware, Medicaid in Arizona, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) has a strong track record of being patient-centric and focused on quality, while still aggressively and effectively accomplishing cost containment. The Medicaid expansion has made a significant impact in the health care of Arizonans, particularly in the areas of behavioral health, chronic disease, substance abuse, and healthcare for children. Arizona has been forward thinking in implementing high value care: with a focus on reducing costs and improving the quality of care.

With the upcoming proposed legislation, the clinicians in Arizona are extremely concerned about the potential for a significant negative impact on the health care of Arizonans. We are greatly concerned about the critical loss of access to health care, as was the case before the passage of the Affordable Care Act. The Medicaid expansion extended coverage to 397,802 adults and 73,224 children in Arizona as of January 2017, according to data from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System.

We specifically oppose the significant cuts to federal Medicaid funding through either per capita caps or block grants, elimination of the enhanced federal match for expansion states, and eliminating the requirement that Medicaid cover essential health benefits (EHBs). The per capita cap proposal in the AHCA would take health coverage away from hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable Arizonans — including women, children, the disabled, those with behavioral health issues, low-income working men and women, and the elderly in long-term care facilities. Of particular note is the impact on rural communities and the hospitals that serve them.

We are very concerned about the loss of federal support for Medicaid. This will have a huge impact on our state, which would have to find new funding or restrict enrollment, reduce benefits and reduce payments to health care providers. Since Arizona AHCCCS performs well on costs, there is little in the way of inefficiencies that can be cut, leaving only essential infrastructure and vital services on the chopping block.

Given the opioid epidemic that we are facing in Arizona, we are also concerned about the impact of the bill on essential benefits such as behavioral health and substance abuse treatment. A well thought out response, as is being led by our Governor, relies heavily on the availability of a robust behavioral health framework.

In addition, maternal care and the care of children are placed significantly at risk by the proposal to cut funding for federal grant funds and/or Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance. Of significant concern is the lack of protections to mothers and children who live in poverty and who have complex medical needs.

By initial estimates, the BCRA will cost Arizona \$7.1 Billion; reduce funding for an estimated 399,363 Arizonans, including over 16,000 with a primary diagnosis of opioid addiction, 80,800 with behavioral health diagnoses and 28,900 with cancer diagnoses.

Arizona has historically been a state that is fair minded and independent. Our Governor has taken the lead to grow jobs and attract investments to the state; ensure that the health of Arizonans is protected and is committed to fighting the opioid crisis. The bill has the potential to impact over 62,000 jobs in Arizona.

We respectfully request you to vote AGAINST the Senate Bill and work to improve the health care of Americans and Arizonans by addressing some of the problems with the Affordable Care Act.

We would be happy to provide input or answer any questions that you may have.

Respectfully,



Priya Radhakrishnan, MD, FACP
Member, American College of Physicians



Rob Aaronson, MD, FACP
Governor, Arizona Chapter, American College of Physicians



Michael Hamant, MD

Michael Hamant, MD
President, Arizona Medical Association



Laurel Mueller, DO

Laurel Mueller, DO
President, Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association



Aaron Wilson, MD

Aaron Wilson, MD
President, Arizona Psychiatric Society



John J. Shaff

John J. Shaff, PA-C, DFAAPA
President, Arizona State Association of Physician Assistants



John Pope, MS, MPH, FAAP
President, The Arizona Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics.



Ilana Addis, MD, MPH
Chair, Arizona Section, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists



Susan Kalota, MD
President, Pima County Medical Society