



September 24, 2017

The Hon. Lisa Murkowski
The Hon. Dan Sullivan
Senators for Alaska

The Hon. John McCain
The Hon. Jeff Flake
Senators for Arizona

The Hon. Susan Collins
The Hon. Angus King
Senators for Maine

The Hon. Sherrod Brown
The Hon. Rob Portman
Senators for Ohio

The Hon. Joe Manchin
The Hon. Shelley Moore Capito
Senators for West Virginia

Dear Senators:

We, the leaders of the Episcopal Church dioceses in Alaska, Arizona, Maine, Ohio, and West Virginia, write to you as we gather in Fairbanks, Alaska, for one of our two annual meetings of the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church. We feel compelled to lift our voices together to urge you to vote against the passage of the Graham-Cassidy Bill.

You have seen the recent report from Avalere Health on the impact this bill would have on federal healthcare spending over the next nine years. A cut of \$215 billion in spending would result, across our five states alone, in a reduction of \$23 billion by 2026. After 2026, when the block grants are cut, it would leave our hospitals and providers and, most importantly, the people they serve in a healthcare free fall, just as baby boomers create the largest demand for healthcare our country will have ever experienced.

The provisions of Graham-Cassidy that eliminate Medicaid expansion and reduce subsidies for lower income people give us further cause to urge you to vote against it. Our Baptismal Covenant calls us to respect the dignity of every human being. It is our responsibility to challenge you, our elected leaders, to work toward justice and equality for the welfare of *all* people, not only those who can afford health insurance.

The news that this bill may come to a vote as early as next week is deeply disturbing to us. A piece of legislation that, in light of its specific provisions, is likely to affect the healthcare of millions of Americans for decades to come, deserves the full consideration of the Senate Health Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. Passage of this bill without the benefit of a full Congressional Budget Office assessment does a disservice of the highest magnitude to the American people. The provisions in Graham-Cassidy that would require each state essentially to re-invent its healthcare system are guaranteed to raise the cost of healthcare for the average consumer. Additionally, the lack of guarantees for essential health benefits such as maternity care and substance abuse treatment casts a blind eye on deeper problems that face many people in the states where we minister, particularly the challenges of rural obstetrical care and the rapidly worsening opioid crisis.

We urge you, Senators, in the spirit of fairness and proper process, to stand up against a bill that would cause such disruption and chaos to healthcare for millions of our citizens, especially the most vulnerable among us. As Christians and as faith leaders in our respective states, we ask that you stand firm on the democratic process that serves us all. Access to such healthcare is crucial to maintaining the social safety net that allows our communities to flourish.

Your votes and voices are critical in ensuring that any Senate bill has a full hearing and offers an opportunity for robust debate, to the worthy end that we improve on the Affordable Care Act and responsibly reform healthcare in this country.

Please be assured that all of you, in addition to your colleagues, remain in our prayers as you engage in the important work of leading our nation. May each of you be graced with the wisdom and strength to serve all Americans.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns.

Respectfully and gratefully,

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