

May 24th, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The Cities Thrive Coalition is writing to voice our strong opposition to the House passed *American Health Care Act (AHCA)*. We are a bi-partisan coalition of 155 of America's mayors, representing all 50 states plus DC, who are advocating on behalf of a stronger and better-funded behavioral health system – one that reaches people where they live, work, worship, and learn.

In January, our coalition addressed a letter to Senate and House leadership urging both chambers to defend and strengthen the vital reforms passed as part of the *Affordable Care Act (ACA)*. Unfortunately, the AHCA does not achieve those goals. This legislation would take our cities back to the pre-ACA era when securing affordable healthcare coverage was challenging and expensive. Specifically, the AHCA would:

- eliminate health care coverage for 24 million Americans;
- eliminate Medicaid Expansion, which covers 1.2 million Americans with serious mental illness and substance misuse issues;
- eliminate the Essential Health Benefits (EHBs) requirement in Medicaid, which means states could eliminate coverage for mental health and substance misuse treatment;
- cut federal funding to Medicaid through the use of a per capita cap or block grant, which would severely limit mental health treatment given that the majority of behavioral health spending comes via Medicaid;
- create a 30% surcharge penalty for individuals who have a gap in coverage, which would directly affect those suffering from mental illness and addiction who are at greater risk for prolonged gaps coverage
- eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF);
- allow states to exempt themselves from covering mental health and addiction treatment; and
- weaken parity by allowing large employers to choose minimum benefit requirements from any state

Put simply, these changes would be devastating. At this moment, one in five Americans is struggling with mental health and substance misuse issues. Depriving them of life-changing – and in many cases, live-saving treatment – will send us back to the time when so many people could only find help in our hospitals, shelters and jails.

The Cities Thrive Coalition is united in urging you to oppose this harmful legislation. We ask both Congressional Democrats and Republicans to work together to build upon the life-saving behavioral health reforms we've achieved over the past decade via the *Mental Health Parity Act*, the *Affordable Care Act*, the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act*, and the *21st Century Cures Act*. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to continue building a behavioral health system that works for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York, NY
Chirlane McCray, First Lady of New York, NY
Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles, CA
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor of Chicago, IL
Slyvester Turner, Mayor of Houston, TX

Jim Kenney, Mayor of Philadelphia, PA
Greg Stanton, Mayor of Phoenix, AZ
Mike Rawlings, Mayor of Dallas, TX
Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San Jose, CA
Steve Adler, Mayor of Austin, TX
Ed Lee, Mayor of San Francisco, CA
Andrew Ginther, Mayor of Columbus, OH
Jennifer Roberts, Mayor of Charlotte, NC
Wayne Hall, Mayor of Hempstead, NY
Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, DC
Ed Murray, Mayor of Seattle, WA
Michael Hancock, Mayor of Denver, CO
Martin Walsh, Mayor of Boston, MA
Ted Wheeler, Mayor of Portland, OR
Jonathan Rothschild, Mayor of Tucson, AZ
Darrell Steinberg, Mayor of Sacramento, CA
Robert Garcia, Mayor of Long Beach, CA
Sly James, Mayor of Kansas City, MO
John Giles, Mayor of Mesa, AZ
Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta, GA
Libby Schaaf, Mayor of Oakland, CA
Betsy Hodges, Mayor of Minneapolis, MN
Mitch Landrieu, Mayor of New Orleans, LA
Kirk Caldwell, Mayor of Honolulu, HI
Lyda Krewson, Mayor of St. Louis, MO
William Peduto, Mayor of Pittsburgh, PA
Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor of Anchorage, AK
Paula Hicks-Hudson, Mayor of Toledo, OH
Levar Stoney, Mayor of Richmond, VA
Buddy Dyer, Mayor of Orlando, FL
Steve Fulop, Mayor of Jersey City, NJ
Greg Fischer, Mayor of Louisville, KY
Pete Saenz, Mayor of Laredo, TX
Paul Soglin, Mayor of Madison, WI
Hillary Schieve, Mayor of Reno, NV
David Bieter, Mayor of Boise, ID
William Bell, Mayor of Birmingham, AL
Lovely Warren, Mayor of Rochester, NY
Marilyn Strickland, Mayor of Tacoma, WA
Dan Horrigan, Mayor of Akron, OH
Mark Stodala, Mayor of Little Rock, AR
Jackie Biskupski, Mayor of Salt Lake City, UT
Andrew Gillum, Mayor of Tallahassee, FL
Madeline Rogero, Mayor of Knoxville, TN

Joseph Petty, Mayor of Worcester, MA
Jorge Elorza, Mayor of Providence, RI
Mark Mitchell, Mayor of Tempe, AZ
Frank Ortis, Mayor of Pembroke Pines, FL
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Tom Butt, Mayor of Richmond, CA
Jeri Muoio, Mayor of West Palm Beach, FL
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Brian Wahler, Mayor of Piscataway, NJ

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Jacob Day, Mayor of Salisbury, MD
Patrick Wojahn, Mayor of College Park, MD
Svante Myrick, Mayor of Ithaca, NY
Josh Moenning, Mayor of Norfolk, NE
Karen Majewski, Mayor of Hamtramck, MI
Lydia Lavelle, Mayor of Carrboro, NC
James Diossa, Mayor of Central Falls, RI
Gary Herzig, Mayor of Oneonta, NY
Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford, MA
Charlene Lovett, Mayor of Claremont, NH
Liz Lempert, Mayor of Princeton, NJ
Dana Hilliard, Mayor of Somersworth, NH
Marcus Muhamad, Mayor of Benton Harbor, MI
Dominic Stampone, Mayor of Haledon, NJ
Shawn Hogan, Mayor of Hornell, NY
Ted Terry, Mayor of Clarkston, GA
John Hollar, Mayor of Montpelier, VT
Peter Lindstrom, Mayor of Falcon Heights, MN

American Counseling Association
National Council for Behavioral Health

CC:

Senator Rob Portman
Senator Bill Cassidy
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Jeff Flake
Senator Tom Cotton
Senator Lamar Alexander
Senator Dean Heller
Senator Joni Ernst
Senator Chuck Grassley
Senator Orrin Hatch
Senator Cory Gardner
Senator Patrick Toomey
Senator John McCain