

September 12, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Co-chair  
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling  
Co-chair  
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray, Congressman Hensarling, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of millions of consumers, patients, and workers, we are writing to urge you to reject cuts or changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that would undermine the potential of the law to make affordable, quality health care coverage more accessible and to improve the health of all Americans.

The Affordable Care Act has three equally important elements: 1) the coverage and insurance market protections that will extend health insurance to 32 million Americans; 2) provisions that place significant emphasis on preventing disease, rather than just treating it, and on improving the overall wellness of all Americans; and 3) delivery system reforms intended to improve the quality of care delivered to all Americans while reducing unnecessary and duplicative health care costs. We are already beginning to witness the benefits of these improvements, and repealing or undermining any of these provisions would be a significant step backwards.

**During this time when the economy is still struggling and millions of Americans are out of work, the ACA provides workers with important insurance protections that must be preserved.** According to a recent study, 15 million Americans lost their jobs *and* their health benefits during the 2008 to 2010 period; the majority of these individuals became uninsured. The ACA contains many important reforms that have already helped to alleviate this very difficult situation and will do even more when fully implemented in 2014 to help workers in similar circumstances. For example, Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plans are an important new coverage option for patients who have been uninsured for six months or more, and tax credits to small businesses have enabled them to provide coverage that would otherwise have been unaffordable. Individuals no longer need to fear losing their coverage because they become sick or reach their plan's lifetime limit on coverage. Hundreds of thousands of young adults have been able to keep or acquire coverage through their parents' policies. In 2014, the expansion of Medicaid and the new tax credits to purchase insurance in the exchanges will guarantee that even in hard times, families will have access to a doctor.

**Prevention is an important investment in our nation's future that must be maintained.** The ACA places an unprecedented emphasis on prevention and wellness. For instance, co-pays and deductibles are no longer a barrier to important disease screenings for millions of Medicare beneficiaries and many individuals with private health insurance coverage. The Prevention and Public Health Trust Fund is making important new investments in helping communities and families make healthier choices and take personal responsibility for their own health.

**Health care costs need to be contained, not shifted to states, businesses, or consumers. The ACA includes many important new reforms that are already starting to improve the value of care delivered, particularly for Americans with chronic conditions, and they must not be interrupted.**

The ACA uses Medicare and Medicaid as vehicles for testing innovative delivery system reforms

that can improve the quality and value of care and then disseminate the most promising reforms throughout the health care system. Already there is evidence that these reforms are starting to work; Medicare spending in 2010 and the first half of 2011 is rising much more slowly than in previous years. Allowing these efforts to continue is one of the most important things Congress can do to improve the way care is delivered to millions of Americans and address rising health care costs.

Our organizations recognize the need to address our nation's long-term fiscal challenges and appreciate the difficult task you face as members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. At the same time, we feel strongly that the Committee's efforts should move our nation forward, not backward, in addressing the health care needs of all Americans. Implementation of the ACA should continue without policy changes, funding reductions or other impediments that slow down or compromise our progress toward the ACA's three critical goals. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

American Heart Association  
Families USA  
The AIDS Institute  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
National Foundation for Mental Health  
American Nurses Association  
Union for Reform Judaism  
National Women's Health Network  
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need  
[National Multiple Sclerosis Society](#)  
HIV Medicine Association  
**National Center for Law and Economic Justice**  
Treatment Access Expansion Project  
Easter Seals  
Women of Reform Judaism