



September 18, 2017

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

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

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health, a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to improving the health of every American, I am writing to voice our strong opposition to the Graham-Cassidy amendment (#1030) to the American Health Care Act (H.R. 1628) and to any legislation that would eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund (Prevention Fund). We urge Senators to work together in a bipartisan manner to ensure that Americans have access to high quality, affordable health care, including clinical preventive services, and to strengthen the public health system so that illnesses, injuries and needless deaths can be avoided.

Although we do not yet have a score from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Graham-Cassidy proposal would dramatically increase the number of uninsured Americans by an estimated 32 million Americans, according to an analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. It also would eliminate \$15.1 billion in current and future public health funding (FY19-FY28). This will threaten the ability of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect Americans' health and slash lifesaving investments in states by more than \$3 billion over five years alone. The result will be American people becoming sicker and poorer. It will impede our ability to respond to and recover from natural disasters such as Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. We will likely see more opioid overdoses, increases in infant mortality and innumerable other preventable health issues, all of which add up to elevated healthcare costs.

We are particularly concerned about the impact on those covered under Medicaid. The same analysis indicates that this proposal would cut Medicaid funding for all but 12 states, with those states with Medicaid expansion populations being particularly disadvantaged. Reductions in Medicaid enrollment would severely restrict access to health care services, especially for those with limited incomes. By eliminating protections for those with pre-existing conditions, Americans who have faced or are currently facing illness will be particularly prone to higher premiums and subsequently higher rates of uninsured. Without affordable insurance coverage, we will see increased rates of preventable illnesses, injuries and deaths.

Coverage is crucially important, but we also want to highlight the consequences of repealing the Prevention Fund, which makes up 12 percent of the CDC budget. Of that investment, \$625 million directly supports state and local public health efforts. This legislation would eliminate the Prevention Fund as of October 2018 (FY19). This would devastate the CDC budget and would

wreak havoc on our efforts to reduce chronic disease rates, immunize our children and prepare the public health system to address infectious disease outbreaks and other threats.

The United States spends more than \$3 trillion annually on health care, but directs just three percent of that toward preventing illness in the first place. Public health funding is already insufficient to meet existing needs, and public health departments struggle every time a new epidemic emerges, as we saw last year with the emergence of the Zika virus. This leaves Americans unnecessarily vulnerable to preventable health problems, ranging from major disease outbreaks and bioterrorism threats to diabetes and opioid misuse.

We don't know where or when the next outbreak will come and we can't wait until a crisis hits to begin investing in public health. Keeping Americans healthier would significantly drive down trips to the doctor's office or emergency room, safeguard Americans against epidemics, and reduce healthcare costs. More than [580 organizations](#) have expressed their opposition to repealing the Prevention Fund. We urge you to oppose this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Auerbach". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

John Auerbach
President and CEO
Trust for America's Health