

May 24<sup>th</sup>, 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 23 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 *21<sup>st</sup> 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  
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Hillary Schieve, Mayor of Reno, NV  
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William Bell, Mayor of Birmingham, AL  
Lovely Warren, Mayor of Rochester, NY  
Marilyn Strickland, Mayor of Tacoma, WA  
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Andrew Gillum, Mayor of Tallahassee, FL  
Madeline Rogero, Mayor of Knoxville, TN

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Jorge Elorza, Mayor of Providence, RI  
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Dom Sarno, Mayor of Springfield, MA  
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Tom Butt, Mayor of Richmond, CA  
Jeri Muoio, Mayor of West Palm Beach, FL  
Pete Buttigieg, Mayor of South Bend, IN  
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Kathy Sheehan, Mayor of Albany, NY  
Ted Winterer, Mayor of Santa Monica, CA  
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Setti Warren, Mayor of Newton, MA  
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Brian Wahler, Mayor of Piscataway, NJ

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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  
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Liz Lempert, Mayor of Princeton, NJ  
Dana Hilliard, Mayor of Somersworth, NH  
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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