

June 27, 2017

Dear Senator:

The undersigned members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Collaborative (IDAC) share serious concerns with aspects of the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) and its injurious impact on people with disabilities. IDAC is a diverse, non-partisan coalition of national religious organizations from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh traditions whose core spiritual values affirm the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

We hold a wide range of religious beliefs and political opinions, yet share a belief that government has a responsibility to protect the rights of all people, including those with disabilities. Furthermore, we believe that access to quality, affordable health care is among the most essential of these rights.

Medicaid is one of the most important programs for people with disabilities, allowing them to live in their community and access the medical care they need.¹ Medicaid provides coverage for over 10 million individuals with disabilities, which is why any cut to the program is a source of fear for our community. Proposals to eliminate the Medicaid expansion and to institute a per capita cap would make individuals often in most need of medical care the least likely to get it. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that by eliminating the Medicaid expansion and instituting a per capita cap, the House-passed bill, the American Health Care Act, would cause 14 million people around the country to lose their Medicaid coverage within the decade. The BCRA would essentially have the same impact.

In-home nursing and specialized care are just two of many services that would be unaffordable for millions of people without the support of Medicaid. Such services grant individuals the independence that is the hallmark of our country's values, and allow people to live in their own homes instead of nursing homes or institutions. Persons with disabilities have fought for decades to receive the medical and other support that should be a right, and the BCRA would eliminate many years of progress.

As people of faith, we believe all people are entitled to receive the medical treatment they need. We are compelled to ensure that this is a reality for individuals with disabilities. Through our faith traditions, we learn to see the Divine image in every person. Disabilities affect all people—of all races, genders, incomes, ages, and religions—and nearly one in five Americans live with some form of a disability. Our religious traditions leave no doubt that providing for the health and dignity of people is among the most important duties of a just society. We cannot abide the harm that the proposed cuts to Medicaid would exact on millions in our communities.

We acknowledge the imperfections within the Affordable Care Act, and believe that much can be done to improve the law. We welcome the possibility of working together to expand healthcare access for people with disabilities. We ask that people with disabilities be given a seat at the table for any decisions that would affect them so dramatically.

¹ <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/ltss/index.html>

We urge you to consider the millions of people whose health would be jeopardized by the Better Care Reconciliation Act and to oppose the BCRA in its current form, and any legislation that would deny services essential to the lives of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Baptist Churches USA

American Baptist Home Mission Societies

American Muslim Health Professionals Enabled Muslim Project

Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America – Bautistas por la Paz

Christian Reformed Disability Concerns Ministry

Disability Concerns Ministry, Reformed Church in America

Disciples Center for Public Witness

Disciples Home Missions

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Faith Inclusion Network of Hampton Roads

Islamic Society of North America

Jewish Federations of North America

Lutheran Services in America Disability Network

National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness

Progressive National Baptist Convention

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Church of Christ Council for Health and Human Service Ministries

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society