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Vote No on the AHCA to Protect Access to HIV Care

March 23, 2017

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the HIV Medicine Association to strongly urge you to oppose **the American Health Care Act (AHCA) due to serious concerns about the harmful impact of the bill on patients with HIV and millions of other Americans with chronic conditions, including the growing number affected by opioid addiction.** HIVMA represents more than 5,000 physicians and other medical providers working on the frontlines of the HIV epidemic in communities across the country.

With early and reliable access to HIV care and treatment, individuals with HIV can effectively suppress the virus allowing them to stay healthy and reducing their risk of transmitting the virus to near zero. In recent years, we have seen critical gains in diagnosing HIV, increasing the number of patients who are on treatment and virally suppressed and reducing the number of new cases of HIV occurring annually. **Passage of the AHCA threatens this important progress and could cripple our response to the HIV epidemic for years to come.**

With more than 40 percent of patients with HIV counting on Medicaid coverage to access lifesaving HIV care and treatment, the proposed Medicaid changes would be particularly devastating to individuals with HIV. The AHCA would severely restrict access to Medicaid coverage and services due to the federal government limiting its commitment to our nation's poorest and most vulnerable. Our low income patients should not need to become sick and disabled before qualifying for the healthcare coverage that could prevent disease progression and allow them to live healthy and productive lives.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated in its initial Cost Estimate that over the next decade 24 million fewer Americans would have healthcare coverage under the AHCA, including 14 million who would have had Medicaid coverage. Changes to the AHCA that have since been proposed or considered including allowing states to impose work requirements, not allowing additional states to expand Medicaid coverage to non-disabled low income single adults at the current matching rate and repealing the minimum benefits requirement that includes substance use and mental health treatment and maternity coverage are likely to further increase the number of uninsured and would increase the number of Americans without coverage that meets their medical needs.

Please consider the impact of your vote on the AHCA on the 1.1 million Americans living with HIV and the millions of Americans across the country whose healthcare coverage and health will be at risk if the bill passes. Please contact the HIVMA Executive Director Andrea Weddle at aweddle@hivma.org or (703) 299-0915 with questions regarding our position or the impact of the AHCA on individuals with HIV.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Armstrong".

Wendy Armstrong, MD, FIDSA
Chair, HIVMA Board of Directors