

Revised Cassidy-Graham ACA Repeal Plan
Statement of HIVMA Chair Wendy Armstrong, MD:

The HIV Medicine Association strongly urges our senators to reject the Cassidy-Graham bill, the latest proposal to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which would undo critical health reforms that have benefited millions of Americans, including many persons living with HIV. Instead, we appeal to senators to support the current bi-partisan and transparent process initiated to strengthen the individual market and lower coverage costs.

Last week the U.S. Census Bureau released the latest data confirming that, in 2016, the uninsured rate in the U.S. dropped to an historic low of 10.1 percent for those under 65 years of age. This latest repeal effort would reverse these coverage gains by ending the Medicaid expansion, capping and cutting Medicaid funding, block granting and cutting funding for premiums subsidies and allowing states to waive critical protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions, as well as other harmful provisions. Shifting the financial risk to states to administer the Medicaid program and the Marketplace plans in conjunction with allowing states to set coverage rules will exacerbate existing health disparities across the U.S. that are already acute for individuals with HIV in the southeastern states where the death rates are three times higher than in some other states.

The health of our patients with HIV and millions of others with chronic conditions depends on having consistent access to reliable, affordable, comprehensive healthcare coverage. This bill would fundamentally restructure and limit federal support for the Medicaid program, a critical safety net for many and an important source of support for more than 40% of individuals with HIV in care. Those with HIV can live long, healthy and productive lives with access to the appropriate health care and treatment; and when effectively treated, their risk of transmitting the virus is nearly zero.

Senators Cassidy and Graham's proposal, like the ACA repeal proposals before it, would put the health and lives of tens of thousands of persons living with HIV at risk. We appeal once more to our senators to stop once and for all efforts to repeal the ACA and turn to improving rather than dismantling critical health coverage reforms. Bipartisan efforts are already underway to develop legislation that will stabilize and improve the individual health insurance market. That is what a majority of Americans want and individual health, public health and the stability of our country depends on it.