



## Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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July 20, 2017

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops urges you to oppose any effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) without a concurrent replacement plan that protects poor and vulnerable people, including immigrants, safeguards the unborn, and supports conscience rights.

In a letter dated January 18, we encouraged Congress to work in a bipartisan fashion to protect vulnerable Americans and preserve important gains in health care coverage and access. Reiterating principles articulated when the ACA was being debated, the letter sent stressed that: “All people need and should have access to comprehensive, quality health care that they can afford, and it should not depend on their stage of life, where or whether they or their parents work, how much they earn, where they live, or where they were born. The Bishops’ Conference believes health care should be truly universal and it should be genuinely affordable.”

Before any legislation had been proposed, the bishops were clear *that a repeal of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act ought not be undertaken without the concurrent passage of a replacement plan* that ensures access to adequate health care for the millions of people who now rely upon it for their wellbeing. To end coverage for those who struggle every day without an adequate alternative in place would be devastating.

Nothing has changed this analysis. Both the American Health Care Act legislation from the U.S. House of Representatives and the Better Care Reconciliation Act from the Senate were seriously flawed, and would have harmed those most in need in unacceptable ways. In the face of difficulties passing these proposals, the appropriate response is not to create greater uncertainty, especially for those who can bear it least, by repealing the ACA without a replacement.

Yet, reform is still needed to address the ACA’s moral deficiencies and challenges with long-term sustainability. Problems with the ACA can be fixed with more narrow reforms, and in a bipartisan way. Congress can extend full **Hyde Amendment protections** to the ACA, enact laws that protect the **conscience rights** of all stakeholders in health care, protect religious freedom, and pass legislation that begins to **remove current and impending barriers to access and affordability, particularly for those most in need.**

Sincerely,

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of Venice  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice  
and Human Development