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More than 7,000 Sisters Sign NETWORK Lobby ‘Nuns’ Letter’ Against ACA Repeal
7,150 Catholic Sisters Nationwide Call on Senate to Cast “Life-Affirming NO Vote.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today 7,150 Catholic Sisters from all 50 states and Washington, D.C. sent a letter to the U.S. Senate asking them to reject the Better Care Reconciliation Act, and any upcoming proposals that would repeal the Affordable Care Act or cut Medicaid. Their message: “We, 7,150 Catholic Sisters in the United States, write to urge you to cast a life-affirming ‘no’ vote against the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA)... **The BCRA would be the most harmful legislation for American families in our lifetimes, and it goes against our Catholic faith teaching.**”

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and leader of Nuns on the Bus, who authored the letter, said, “The mission of Catholic Sisters has always been to serve our nation’s most vulnerable people. As such, we are united in opposition to the current Republican healthcare proposals.”

The letter states, “As Catholic women religious, we have witnessed firsthand the moral crisis of lack of quality, affordable healthcare in this country. We have seen early and avoidable deaths because of lack of insurance, prohibitive costs, and lack of access to quality care. **We fought for the expansion of coverage in the Affordable Care Act because we saw the life-giving value of crucial healthcare programs such as Medicaid.** This program covers over 70 million Americans, including children, pregnant women (and nearly half of all births in this country), people with disabilities, people struggling to get by, and senior citizens. Further, some of our fellow women religious rely on Medicaid in nursing homes when we can no longer care for our sisters at home.”

While the letter focuses on the Senate’s original proposal, it includes a preamble criticizing the last-minute desperate attempts to pass a poorly-crafted, unpopular bill that puts politics over the nation’s health. **“Since this letter was circulated, Senate leadership has repeatedly changed course – from the BCRA, to a repeal of the Affordable Care Act without a replacement, to amendments of bills from 2015. This is not good governance...** Rather than continuing to negotiate partisan legislation that would cause tens of millions of Americans to lose access to health coverage, Congress should seek bipartisan solutions to expand quality, affordable coverage.”

Sister Simone concluded, “As Catholic Sisters, we stand by our belief that health is a universal right and urge Senators to vote no on the motion to proceed for any bill that would repeal the ACA and cut Medicaid.”

Read the full text of the letter, and see all 100 pages of signatures from the 7,150 Catholic Sisters online at www.networklobby.org/2017sistersletter.

Catholic Sisters sent a [similar letter in 2010, calling on the House of Representatives to cast a “life-affirming YES vote” on the Affordable Care Act](#). It was widely attributed as crucial to the final passage of the ACA.

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Sister Simone Campbell, SSS and other Catholic Sisters are available for interviews. Quotes are available on the following pages. For inquiries, contact Ashley Wilson awilson@networklobby.org or 202-601-7856.

Below are quotes from Catholic Sisters who have signed the letter available for publication or interview:

Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, Washington, DC:

"The mission of Catholic Sisters has always been to serve our nation's most vulnerable people. As such, we are united in opposition to the current Republican healthcare proposals. Since this letter was circulated, Senate leadership has repeatedly changed course – from the BCRA, to a repeal of the Affordable Care Act without a replacement, to amendments of bills from 2015. This is not good governance. As Catholic Sisters, we stand by our belief that health is a universal right and urge Senators to vote no on the motion to proceed for any bill that would repeal the ACA and cut Medicaid."

Sr. Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Silver Spring, MD:

"As women of faith, we take seriously the gospel call to care for those in need. We are committed to a faith-filled vision of healthcare that guarantees health and dignity to all regardless of their station or circumstance. Catholic sisters have been serving and healing the people of the United States for almost 300 years. We continue to minister in hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics across this country. That includes advocating for those whose life and dignity are threatened by the proposed Senate legislation. We urge Senators to reject this bill and seek a bipartisan solution that will guarantee the right to healthcare for all."

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC, President/CEO of Catholic Health Association, Washington, DC:

"After careful study, CHA is convinced that both the Senate and House bill would have incredibly negative consequences. Neither bill is worthy of the American people and should be opposed. We applaud Legislators both Republican and Democratic, who have called for a bipartisan effort to get a bill that truly helps this country have available, accessible and affordable health care for all. We hope that Congress can now turn a page and open a new chapter. This country needs and deserves a healthcare bill that truly delivers quality and affordable healthcare to all Americans. There is the competence and resources to do this if we work together. Health is too critical to be allowed to be a partisan issue. CHA stands ready to work with all members of Congress to achieve this."

Sr. Claire Regan, SC, New Orleans, LA:

"New Orleans has a service based, tourism economy which produces many low-income jobs. Sudden or serious illness or injury produce catastrophic consequences to individuals and families supported by these low-wage jobs. Further, in my ministry to the elderly poor in New Orleans, I see how long the wait list is to receive home care support. Changes to Medicaid would make this wait list even longer. Medicaid eligibility was finally expanded in January 2016 under the Affordable Care Act. We cannot afford to lose it under the terms of this new bill."

Sr. Theresa Therrien, SCIM, Biddeford, ME

"As a sister in Maine and also an LCSW, I am working to help people make the best of their lives. But how can they if the Senate repeals the Affordable Care Act? Depriving 32 million people, especially cutting Medicaid for our most vulnerable people, is unconscionable. Health is a basic right for all people, and we all must work together to help and love our neighbor."

Sr. Joanne Roy, RGS, Saco, ME

"Pope John Paul II reminds us, "A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members." Senators must continue to say NO to motions that will repeal the Affordable Care Act, motions that all continue to deprive 32 million Americans of healthcare and will cut Medicaid for those most in need of care. As a Sister in Maine, I know how much people are suffering from the limited Medicaid coverage our state presently has; the proposed Senate solutions would only bring more suffering."

Sr. Erin Zubal, OSU, NETWORK Lobby Board Member, Cleveland, OH

"As a Sister who lives and ministers in Ohio and a woman of faith, I strongly urge our Senators to oppose any motion to proceed for a bill that will repeal the Affordable Care Act. Depriving healthcare for 32 million people, and especially cutting Medicaid for our most vulnerable, is unconscionable. Our faith calls us to love

our neighbor, uphold the human dignity of every person and be present to each other. We must work together to ensure our brothers and sisters are cared for, not denied access to our most basic human rights."

Sr. Gemma Doll, OP, Cincinnati, OH

"Pope Francis has explained, 'healthcare is not a consumer good but a universal right, so access to health services cannot be a privilege.' The current healthcare bill is immoral and further marginalizes the most vulnerable within our communities. As women of faith, we know healthcare is critical in keeping our communities healthy and our neighborhoods safe, and the most recent healthcare bill disregards the common good and instead provides tax cuts to the wealthy while stripping Medicaid from individuals who need it the most. We continue to urge Senators to listen to their constituents, to work for the common good, and to vote NO."

Sr. Carren Herring, RSM, Cincinnati, OH

"As a person of faith, a Sister of Mercy, I speak out against the Senate's efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and revoke health coverage from more than 20 million Americans. Senators, this is a moral issue. In a country that enjoys a high standard of living, it is wrong to deny access to life-saving medical care to our people. Our sacred texts clearly state 'what you do to the least of my people, you do to me.' Taking health insurance away from millions of people and giving tax breaks to those who can afford their taxes is shameful, punitive, and just plain wrong."

Sr. Christine Riley, CSJ, Wheeling, WV

"As a Catholic Sister who lives in Wheeling, WV, I urge the Senate to vote NO on any effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act that denies families of their basic human right to quality, accessible, affordable health care. Many families in West Virginia and throughout our country bear heavy burdens living in poverty, and they depend on Medicaid to meet their basic health needs. We are all called to protect the life and dignity of every person, especially the most vulnerable – they are our sisters and brothers in need. I trust and pray that our Senators will continue to have the courage, integrity, and justice rooted in compassion to work together toward improvement of our healthcare system for the common good."

Sr. Kathleen Durkin, CSJ, Wheeling, WV

"As a Sister who has lived and ministered in rural and urban West Virginia for over 50 years, I strongly urge our Senators to oppose any effort to proceed with a bill that will repeal the Affordable Care Act. Depriving healthcare to millions and cutting Medicaid for the most vulnerable in our society is unconscionable. Our faith commits us to care for all of our sisters and brothers, and the Affordable Care Act gives expression to this commitment."

Sr. Janet Kinney, CSJ, Executive Director of Providence House, New York, NY

"As executive director of Providence House, which provides housing and services for women and children who are in the lowest socioeconomic bracket, I witness firsthand the effect Medicaid has as a lifeline providing essential healthcare and services needed for those whose lives depend on it. The radical cuts to Medicaid proposed by the Senate bill are unconscionable. The BCRA favors the wealthiest Americans and will reduce healthcare benefits of poorer families. This is not only unjust, but shows a lack of care and regard for those who need our care the most."

Sr. Barbara Pfarr, SSND, Milwaukee, WI

"As a Roman Catholic and a School Sister of Notre Dame I'm called to work for a just society where all people have what they need for a fully human life. The proposed Republican healthcare bill violates that call by taking health services from children, the elderly, low-income families, and other vulnerable people. We cannot let this go forward. Healthcare is a human right and must be respected and provided for."

Sr. Susan M Maloney, SNJM, PhD, Los Angeles, CA

"The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary – long known throughout the USA as educators and advocates for those living in poverty – are stunned by the Senate's proposed healthcare legislation. The Senate could be on the verge of rolling back the healthcare advances we have made as a nation. The

proposed bill reflects a mean-spirited and callous attitude toward those most in need. Healthcare is a fundamental human and moral right regardless of one's economic status. It is inconceivable to me that members of the U.S. most in need would be denied healthcare. It does not reflect in any way my faith or Jesus's call for a preferential option for the poor."

Sr. Elaine Davia, CBS, RN, C-APRN, Marriottsville, MD

"As an RN and Family Nurse Practitioner with Bon Secours Hospital in Baltimore and another clinic in Westminster, MD for those who are low or no income, I am particularly concerned with the care of poor and vulnerable individuals. I know there are improvements that should be made to the ACA, but what I also know is that for the first time in my 47 plus years of experience, my patients are able to get care they need in a timely manner. Now I don't have to spend 80% of my time with them trying to find a medicine, test, treatment, or referral because they can't pay for what they need; I am able to spend more time on teaching and prevention. It is so short-sighted to say the ACA isn't working and is too expensive and should be stopped. Please Senators, I beg you, vote no."

Sr. Geraldine Nowak, OSF, Toledo, OH

"I am concerned that the current proposed healthcare bill will leave many people behind with no opportunity for healthcare services. I've heard the stories of older and younger people who would feel the impact. It is heart-wrenching! It is mind blowing! I am also concerned that current proposals would have a very negative domino effect on hospitals and subsequently the people they serve here in Ohio. This bill will lead to very immoral outcomes. This simply cannot happen in America where so many people at the grassroots level are working for the common good."

Sr. Francine Schwarzenburger, OP, New Orleans, LA

"As a Sister who lives in New Orleans, I encounter the poor and vulnerable, the elderly and people with disabilities, every day. Taking away their access to quality, affordable healthcare would be immoral. Everyone has a right to the healthcare needed for a life of dignity. Our Senators must remember that."

Sr. Molly Bauer, CSJ, Wheeling, WV

"As a Sister who has lived and ministered in WV for more than 50 years I am well aware of the health-related needs of the poor and elderly in our state. I urge Senator Capito to stay firm and oppose any motion to proceed with a bill that will repeal the Affordable Care Act. Her NO vote on the motion to proceed is crucial, as cutting Medicaid to our most poor and vulnerable is unconscionable. Our faith compels us to love our neighbor, and uphold the human dignity of every person. We must work together to ensure our brothers and sisters are cared for, not denied access to our most basic human rights."

NETWORK – advocates for justice inspired by Catholic sisters – educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation. They have a 45-year track record of lobbying for critical federal programs that support those at the margins and prioritize the common good. www.networklobby.org

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