

INTERFAITH HEALTHCARE COALITION

For Immediate Release: September 25, 2017

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More than 3,000 Faith Leaders Call on Senators to Oppose Graham-Cassidy

“We, the more than 3,000 undersigned faith leaders representing Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist traditions, believe that healthcare is an essential human right.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today more than 3,000 faith leaders from all 50 states, Guam, and Washington, D.C. sent a letter to the U.S. Senate today asking them to reject the Graham-Cassidy healthcare bill, potentially being brought to a vote before budget reconciliation rules expire. Their message:

“It was a tremendous relief that Congress was working in an open, bipartisan way to improve our healthcare system. But now, we are outraged that Congress would abandon these efforts for another partisan attempt that would take healthcare away from millions of our people. For the sake of our people, please oppose the Graham-Cassidy proposal and support the reauthorization of the vital Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Disproportionate Share Hospitals (DSH) program.”

The letter continues:

“To allow Graham-Cassidy to pass the Senate - and to allow the CHIP and DSH programs to lapse - is to allow the health of America’s most vulnerable people to face unnecessary and immoral obstacles... As faith leaders, it is our duty to care for and minister to people in our communities. As Senators, you have a similar duty to care for your constituents. Please focus on bipartisanship rather than political posturing, oppose Graham-Cassidy, and extend CHIP and DSH funding.”

The effort was organized by the Interfaith Healthcare Coalition, a coalition of organizations working together on healthcare, on Wednesday September 20. In addition to defending and improving the ACA, the coalition is also committed to advocating for other crucial health programs, like the Children’s Health Insurance Program and Disproportionate Share Hospitals, which expire at the end of the month.

The letter is organized by denomination (featuring some national leaders at the beginning) and then by state. It includes signatures from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Baha’i, Baptist, Catholic, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Muslim, Jewish, Presbyterian Church (USA), Sikh, Episcopal Church, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, and additional faith traditions.

Read the full text of the letter, and see all 60 pages of signatures from faith leaders from all 50 states online at www.networklobby.org/FaithAgainstGC.

Following this release are quotes from national faith leaders who signed the letter.

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Below are quotes from some of the Faith Leaders who signed the letter opposing Graham-Cassidy:

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice:

Once again, a group of white, male Senators have crafted a plan that is out of touch with the realities of millions of ordinary families and fails the moral tests of our faith. The Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson proposal is immoral policy that would hurt millions of people, and their plan to rush it through without knowing the impact is reckless. This new repeal bill goes far beyond the BCRA by eliminating all ACA premium and copay supports, gutting Medicaid, and removing protections for people with pre-existing conditions. These policies target people struggling to get by, the sick, and the elderly—the very people Jesus teaches us to put first. Catholic sisters stand with our nation's most vulnerable people and we must stand against this anti-health, anti-life legislation.

Bishop William Barber II, Repairers of the Breach:

This bill is racist and takes health care from millions of African Americans being peddled with a states rights agenda. It is a form of economic injustice that will hurt the poor who are mostly white. Bad for America.

Valarie Kaur, The Revolutionary Love Project:

As a Sikh, an American, a lawyer, and a mother, I ask Congress to protect healthcare for millions of Americans who most need it.

Sr. Patricia Chappell, Pax Christi USA:

Pax Christi USA strongly believes that healthcare is a human right which every human being is entitled to. The Graham-Cassidy healthcare repeal bill is in violation of that human right. It threatens millions of people, children, elderly, those with pre-existing conditions and those made poor by our unjust economic system. We add our national voice to repeal this unjust piece of legislation.

Colin Christopher, Islamic Society of North America:

We have a moral obligation in this country to care for those who are young, elderly, sick, or unable to fend for themselves. If we can build the mightiest defense system the world has ever known, we also have the ability to fund the best preventative health care system. The Graham-Cassidy bill would decimate patient protections, decrease care, and directly lead to thousands of preventable lives lost that are currently being saved by the affordability and coverage of the ACA.

Diane Randall, Friends Committee on National Legislation:

The Cassidy-Graham health care proposal violates the very values that lie at the core of Quaker morals. This bill would threaten the health and dignity of millions of Americans, especially low-income children, seniors, and people with disabilities. Cassidy-Graham includes extreme cuts to Medicaid, undermines critical protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions, shifts billions of dollars onto states, and will cause tens of millions of Americans to lose health coverage. Moreover, advancing this legislation will destroy the productive and bipartisan work currently taking place. Rather than trying to force through yet another rushed, ultra-partisan, dysfunctional health care proposal that causes millions of Americans to lose health coverage, Congress should refocus back on the bipartisan negotiations so desperately needed to stabilize the insurance markets and lower health care costs.

Jim Winkler, National Council of Churches:

Graham-Cassidy is bad legislation that will bring harm to millions of Americans. Faith leaders must name this reality and call on our elected leaders to do no harm and vote against this bill.

Dr. Noel Castellanos, Christian Community Development Association:

As people of faith we lift our voices to declare to our lawmakers that eliminating healthcare for millions of vulnerable Americans is shameful and immoral. To do so is putting politics over the needs of people and cannot be justified. Fix ACA so more Americans can get coverage, don't obliterate it at the expense of the poor.

Sr. Patricia McDermott, RSM, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas:

The Sisters of Mercy, who have been providing healthcare services for people who are poor and vulnerable for nearly 175 years in the U.S., believe that access to health care and adequate health insurance coverage is a fundamental human right. Rather than taking away health care for millions of Americans over the next several years, we should be finding ways to strengthen and expand health coverage and improve affordability.

Sr. Joan Marie Steadman, CSC, Leadership Conference of Women Religious:

As women of faith, we take seriously the gospel call to care for those in need. Catholic sisters are committed to a faith-filled vision of healthcare that guarantees dignity and the right to quality care to all. We urge Senators to reject Graham-Cassidy and seek a bipartisan solution.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights:

Our insistence on the moral duty of the government to ensure health care for all comes from our grounding both in human rights, and in Jewish teachings. Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, one of the most important twentieth-century legal authorities, notes, "When poor people are ill and cannot afford medical expenses, the community sends a doctor to visit them, and the medicine is paid for by the communal fund." (Tzitz Eliezer 5:4) And Rabbi Shlomo Goren, former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel declares, "the government may not excuse itself from responsibility toward the sick since the government is responsible for the health of the people." (Assia journal 21:40) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires that all countries provide "standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including ... medical care."

Bishop Gene Robinson, the Episcopal Church:

A nation will be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. Jesus is coming -- and he's NOT pleased!