

NATIONAL  
HEALTH CARE  
*for the*  
HOMELESS  
COUNCIL

September 22, 2017

Statement for the Record submitted to the Senate Committee on Finance

Hearing to Consider the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson Proposal, Monday, September 25, 2017

Dear Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, and members of the Senate Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to share a statement on the record on the Graham-Cassidy bill. On behalf of the National Health Care for the Homeless community, which represents 300 federally qualified health centers and others serving nearly 1 million patients experiencing homelessness each year, I write to ask you to protect access to health care, and most specifically to protect the Medicaid program.

Under the Affordable Care Act, this country made enormous gains to reduce the uninsured. As providers serving people who are homeless—a group largely ineligible for insurance previously—we saw a significant increase in insured individuals and the quality of the services we can provide has improved, among many other positive changes. States that expanded Medicaid have been better able to end homelessness because of the comprehensive care that insurance facilitates. Unfortunately, not all states expanded this life-saving program, and it is to the detriment of state budgets, public health goals, health care providers, and—most importantly—citizens of this country who otherwise go without care. The lack of basic health care for all people perpetuates homelessness and is devastating to families, communities, and a drain on this country's economy. The Graham-Cassidy bill rearranges the financial structure of Medicaid into a block grant and thus reduces this country's capacity to care for homeless and medically vulnerable individuals.

**The National Health Care for the Homeless Council strongly opposes the Graham-Cassidy proposal and urges Senators to instead focus on bipartisan solutions to strengthen the ACA.** Furthermore, as you approach legislation that changes the health care system, we strongly urge you to protect the traditional expansion of Medicaid and expand its coverage to the 3 million people living below poverty in the 19 states that have yet to expand. Expansion of coverage—not restricting it—is how we achieve greater health and lower costs.

Health reform is an opportunity to adjust the moral tenor of this country, and recognize that health care is a human right. We are counting on you.

Sincerely,



G. Robert Watts  
Chief Executive Officer