



## Advancing Our Values–NOW

A Letter from Bobby Watts, CEO of the National HCH Council

May 2017

In these turbulent and changing times, our tactics and short-term objectives may necessarily change, but our principles and values do not. The U.S. Senate is considering changes to our health care system that would have a significant impact on the Health Care for the Homeless community. We must insist that the result of any legislation achieves the objectives below, which are based on **our value that Health Care is a Human Right**:

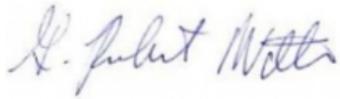
- **Improve access to health care coverage:** While the Affordable Care Act was far from perfect, it resulted in 11 million low-income Americans gaining new coverage—including many individuals without housing. Lives have been saved, health has been improved, and homelessness has been ended for those newly connected to care. However, 30 million remain uninsured, including many in states that did not expand Medicaid. We urge the Senate to ensure that any legislation results in more people with health coverage and does not create barriers to coverage such as work requirements. We cannot move backwards on this.
- **Protect comprehensive care:** Millions of Americans suffer from mental health and addiction disorders, and America is currently in the midst of the worst epidemic of opioid misuse in history. These behavioral health disorders are a major cause of homelessness, but effective, integrated care has proven to help people without homes get clean, healthy, housed, and remain in housing. We urge the Senate to protect existing requirements for essential health benefits in all insurance plans. Helping people get healthy and housed depends on it.
- **Improve access to preventive care:** A high-quality health system facilitates appropriate screenings and preventive care to catch disease at the earliest possible stage, engage in treatment, and prevent worsening of health. Our goal is a healthy populace, and preventing disease is the best way to do that. We urge the Senate to enact legislation that facilitates early and easy access to care, rather than impose barriers that only serve to discourage care.

These objectives flow logically from **our value that Health Care is a Human Right** – access to health care should not be based on one's income, employment, health status, or state of residence. In short, the only criterion for receiving health care in a nation as wealthy as ours is that one is human – that's what "Human Rights" means!

At the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, we believe that the best way to ensure that health care as a human right is practiced is through a universal, single-payer system. While that remains our long-range objective, our immediate focus is to ensure that any changes from Congress at a minimum meet the above objectives and protect vulnerable populations. **NOW is the time to make our voices heard.** Those experiencing homelessness—and those who work alongside them—should be driving the solutions that impact them most directly. Congress will be on recess in their district offices next week, which offers you the opportunity to engage them on these principles

Lives depend on this. **Show up.** Stand up. **Speak out.** Get engaged. **NOW.**

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bobby Watts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bobby" and last name "Watts" clearly legible.

Bobby Watts  
Chief Executive Officer