



Senate Healthcare Campaign Materials May 2017

Background

The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities is a strategic action network representing thousands of health and human services professionals who come into contact daily with families, seniors, children and the systems they rely on for affordable healthcare coverage and services.

On Thursday, May 4, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass the American Health Care Act (AHCA) to replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As the bill moves to the U.S. Senate, it is our belief that elements of the House bill will be rewritten, for example retaining the existing pre-existing condition protections. However, our understanding is that Medicaid remains a target. Our focus going forward will be to:

- Insist on a net positive impact on populations served by Medicaid, as well as local and state economies, in the face of efforts to redesign Medicaid's federal-state partnership
- Maintain parity between health and behavioral health insurance coverage
- Further reduce the number of uninsured people

We also want to emphasize the important role that health and human services professionals can play in this effort. You and your peers can work in partnership with policymakers to craft legislation that will promote the acceleration of addressing the social determinants of health to drive early intervention and prevention to improve population outcomes and achieve cost savings. The following key talking points speak to communications and advocacy goals. Additional tools for Alliance members include phone call and meeting scripts for Members of Congress, a social media toolkit, and a sample letter to the editor.

Key Talking Points

- I believe that our country thrives when everyone can reach their full potential.
- A foundational support that every person and community needs to thrive is access to affordable, preventive, fully integrated physical and mental health care.
- Because my organization works at the nexus of families, communities, and public systems every day, I can serve as a vital partner in pursuit of healthcare solutions that will accelerate progress toward achieving a healthy and equitable society.
- In any legislative measure to improve our country's health care system, I am looking for:
 - A net positive impact on all populations served by Medicaid, as well as on our local and state economies.
 - Affordable, preventive, fully-integrated health care, regardless of income
 - Funding for prevention, early intervention, and more upstream services.

- The acceleration of addressing the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health to improve outcomes and achieve cost-savings.
- Altering major components of our country's health care system can have unintended, cascading negative impacts. I want to express my concern about the implications for the proposed changes to how the federal government finances the Medicaid program. I believe a decision of this magnitude should have public hearings so we can be made fully aware of possible cascading negative impacts on our state and community.

Engaging Your Senators (May and June)

- **Call your Senators' offices.** You can call your legislator's office during regular office hours. Contact information and the above talking points are available through our Policy Action Center.
- **Use Twitter to engage with your Senators' offices.** [See sample Tweets below.](#)
- **Write a letter to the editor (LTE) of your local newspaper.** [See sample LTE below.](#)
- **Build or deepen Senate relationships.** If you do not already have direct relationships to your state's two U.S. senators, begin work to make those connections now. [Contact the Alliance Public Policy Office](#) if we can be helpful in your relationship-building efforts.
- **Schedule meetings with your senators and/or their staff.** You can schedule a phone call, in-person or virtual meeting with your senators' state staff or Washington, D.C.-based health staff. It's important to speak with their staff about policy matters and the implications for the people served by your organization, for your organization, and for your community.
- **Attend a listening session/town hall during the Memorial Day recess period.** The Memorial Day recess period runs from May 30 through June 2. If you are not able to secure a meeting with your senators during this time, you can call their offices or check their websites to find out if they are hosting town halls or other listening sessions. Prepare one or two questions ahead of time. Your questions should be sharp and fact-based, ideally including information on the member of Congress' record, votes they've taken, or statements they've made. Example questions:
 - The House bill to repeal and replace the current law fundamentally alters the state-federal financing structure for the Medicaid program. I believe such changes would have a significant impact on our state budget and local economy. What is currently being discussed in the Senate as it pertains to the financing structure of the Medicaid program?
 - Can you ensure that any changes made to the country's health care system by the Senate will result in gains, not losses, for the people in our state, as well as our local and state economies?
 - The House rushed to vote on the American Health Care Act without knowing its full impact, will that also occur in the Senate? What is currently being discussed in the Senate?
- **Prepare a story.** Stories from constituents are so important to helping policymakers understand the impact of their decisions. Share what you have heard from families in your community. Help your senators understand the importance of the Medicaid program to the people you serve, your local and state economies, and your organization by developing a story. You will find an guidelines for developing a personal impact story on page 23 of the [Alliance Policy, Advocacy, and Communications Toolkit](#).

Sample Tweets

By including your senators' Twitter handles in your tweets, you are ensuring that the tweets will show up in their feeds. Make sure to send these tweets to both your senators! Here are some sample tweets related to our support for equitable, affordable healthcare policies:

- America's health and human services professionals urge [@YourSenator] to support #Medicaid. Decisions should result in gains not losses.
- #Medicaid connects people to substance abuse treatment to address the #opioidcrisis in our state. [@YourSenator]
- #Medicaid means health access for many in our community. [@YourSenator]
- I support expanded and affordable healthcare coverage regardless of income. [@YourSenator]
- #Prevention and #EarlyIntervention are keys to affordable health care for America's families and communities. [@YourSenator]
- #Medicaid helps pay for long-term care. [kaiserf.am/2qC1t2p](https://www.kaiserfamilyfoundation.org/2017/02/20/long-term-care-costs/) [@YourSenator]
- #Medicaid provides coverage for nearly half of all births, 2 out of 5 kids in the US. #ProtectOurFuture. Call [@YourSenator]

Sample Letter to the Editor

Feel free to modify any part of the sample letter to make it relevant to your community and/or state. Inserting local or state data increase the probability of having the letter published.

Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to your recent coverage of Congressional efforts to repeal and replace the current health care law [cite article headline and date]. My organization, [list name], serves [insert numbers served] and is a member of the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, a national strategic action network of thousands of nonpartisan health and human service professionals who work in communities at the nexus of families and the health care system.

Altering major components of our country's health care system would have a cascading negative impact on our state and community. Specifically, I want to express my concern about the implications for the proposed changes to how the federal government finances the Medicaid program. In the U.S, Medicaid funds nearly half of all births. It also ensures that seniors can afford long-term care services. Medicaid also plays a role in connecting people to substance abuse treatment, very important given the opioid crisis in our country. Medicaid also ensures that people have access to mental health services. State elected officials would be forced to make tough decisions to make up for the loss of federal dollars to our state budget, not just in the Medicaid program, but across the entire state budget.

We hope that our senators will work together to ensure that [insert state name] benefits from any decisions made by Washington D.C.'s political leaders. I call on both [INSERT Senators' names] to support reform efforts that result in a net positive impact on populations served by Medicaid, as well as our local and state economies.

[Your name, title, & organization]