

June 12, 2017

Dear Member of Congress:

As national, state, and local organizations concerned about immigrant rights or access to affordable health care, we are writing to strongly urge you to **VOTE NO** on **HR 2581**, the **“Verify First” Act**. This bill is an attack on people’s ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color. It is not the “common sense” taxpayer protection bill that its supporters would have you believe.

HR 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance. It would strip away provisions that provide for a person to obtain subsidies for enrollment in an Affordable Care Act (or the contemplated American Health Care Act) plan while they work with Department of Health and Human Services to verify their U.S. citizenship or immigration status. The people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized. The bill also affects many immigrants, especially those newly arrived or certain victims of domestic violence and trafficking survivors.

The fact is that when individuals are not able to immediately verify their citizenship or immigration status on an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it begins an often months long, strenuous process of sending in documents that must be physically inspected. Health care assisters routinely say these clients are the hardest cases they work on because the process for verifying citizenship and immigration status is a time-consuming exercise in dealing with inefficient government processes.

Rather than protect American taxpayers, HR 2581 would strip from American taxpayers important protections that are needed to overcome deficiencies in federal government databases. Immigrants who are not lawfully present are categorically barred from enrollment in health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces, and for the subsidies that make that insurance affordable. Moreover, safeguards protecting taxpayers are already built into the ACA; individuals whose citizenship or immigration status cannot be verified already are required to pay back all of their subsidies when they file their taxes and “reconcile” their premium tax credits.

Supporters of this bill cite a sloppy Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee report that arrived at a made-up number of supposed “fraud.” It’s just not true. The committee assumed that every person who lost coverage for failure to verify their citizenship and immigration status was undocumented. In the experience of our organizations and organizations we work with, this is false. These reports describe the first year of the marketplaces, and it is well documented that system outages and understaffing, among other technical problems, contributed to the federal Marketplace’s failure to verify consumers’ status promptly. The Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General reported in 2014 that a cause of the delay in verification was the agency’s lack of prioritization of this issue.

Despite huge gains since then, problems still persist. The Social Security database holding many citizens' information may not reflect common changes, such as when a person marries and changes their last name, or when someone naturalizes and gains U.S. citizenship. People lose their coverage because they receive notices in languages they cannot read. Immigrants are required to submit documents multiple times, or wait while the Department of Homeland Security finds paper files, a result of deficiencies in their databases affecting groups like asylum applicants and some survivors of domestic violence. These are among the many issues consumers face.

Congress has already deprived undocumented immigrants from the ability to buy coverage, even at full price, so they can see a doctor when they are sick, but this bill would go a step further to delay or put out of reach affordable health insurance for many citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Our organizations firmly believe that this would be detrimental to the people we represent and to all of our communities as a whole. We have seen that when health insurance is unaffordable, people are effectively prevented from obtaining access to the care they need to be healthy.

This bill is not just an attack on our health care system, it is also an attack on immigrants and people of color, which our organizations stand firmly against. In his statements when introducing this bill, Rep. Lou Barletta focused the bill as part of his effort to "stop illegal immigration." Rep. Barletta has a long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, from trying to prevent immigrants from leasing a residence to stating that they should be denied life-saving services in hospital emergency rooms. This bill is simply a vehicle for scapegoating immigrants and people of color and will keep eligible people from accessing health care.

We the undersigned organizations urge you to vote **NO** on HR 2581 and the continued assault on immigrants and the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

National

Advocates for Youth

African American Ministers In Action

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

American Friends Service Committee

American Intercession

American Society on Aging

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL)

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)

Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
Breast Cancer Action
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Church World Service (CWS)
Coalition on Human Needs
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
Conscious Talk Radio
Detention Watch Network
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Dominican Sisters
Dominicans of Sinsinawa
Family Equality Council
Farmworker Justice
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research & Action Center
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor IJPC
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Generations Inc.
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Indivisible
Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Interfaith Worker Justice
Irish Apostolate USA
Jobs With Justice
Justice in Aging
Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Lambda Legal
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Medical Mission Sisters
Mi Familia Vota
MomsRising
NAACP
NAPAFASA
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Churches
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Women's Health Network
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
NMAC
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Our Revolution
Peace and Justice Office of the Congregation of Notre Dame
Physicians for Reproductive Health
PICO National
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign
Prevention Institute
Project Inform
Racine Dominicans
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
Refuge Ministries
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union
Sisters of Charity
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Justice Team
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
United Sikhs
United We Dream
Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province
We Belong Together
API Wellness

State and Local

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services
Advocates for Children and Youth
AgeOptions
Almost Home, Inc.
Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian Community Alliance - Cincinnati OH
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Services In Action, Inc.
Baltimore Jewish Council
California Health Professional Student Alliance
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ)
California OneCare
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Partnership
California Physicians Alliance
CASA
Center for Southeast Asians
Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition
Child Care Resources of Rockland
Children Now
Children's Defense Fund-CA
Chinatown Service Center
Chinese-American Planning Council
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Collaborative Center for Justice
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Columbia Legal Services
Community Health Councils
D. C. Hunger Solutions
DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform
Empower Missouri
Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa
Erie Benedictines for Peace
Esperanza Health Centers
EverThrive Illinois
Farmworker Association of Florida

Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)
Give for a Smile
Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness
Having Our Say Coalition
Health Access California
Health Care for All-WA
Health Law Advocates
Healthy House Within A MATCH Coalition
Hmong Ohio of Tomorrow
Hunger Action Los Angeles
IHM Sisters, Immaculata, PA
IL Hunger Coalition
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Indivisible Mountain Home, Idaho
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
IRIS - Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services
Islamic Civic Engagement Project
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Kansas Appleseed
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY
La Fe Policy Research and Education Center
La Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
Legal Council for Health Justice
Legal Services of Southern Piedmont
Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Make the Road New York
Maryland CASH Campaign
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Maternal and Child Health Access
Maternity Care Coalition
National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter
National Tongan American Society
Nationalities Service Center
NC Child
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Legal Assistance Group
NICOS Chinese Health Coalition
NJ State Industrial Union Council
NOELA Community Health Center
Northern NJ Chapter, National Organization for Women

Northwest Health Law Advocates
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Office of the Health Care Advocate at Vermont Legal Aid
OneAmerica
Pacific Islander Health Partnership
Pitkin County Human Services
Public Justice Center
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)
Rainbow Center
Reformed Church of Highland Park
RESULTS-Santa Fe (NM)
Salaam Cleveland
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
Social Justice Committee St. Patrick Church
South Asian Network
Southwest Women's Law Center
St. Francis St Vincent de Paul Society
Tennessee Justice Center
Thai Health And Information Service
The Children's Partnership
The Latino Health Insurance Program, Inc.
Turning Points
United Way Bay Area
URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Voices for Vermont's Children
Voz Hispana Cambio Comunitario
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Healthcare Access Alliance
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO
West Chester Food Cupboard
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Westlake Chinese Culture Association
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Women's Action Movement Washtenaw County MI
Worksite Wellness LA
Xaverian Brothers
Young Women United