



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator McConnell, Senator Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Representative Pelosi:

As Congress continues its work on health care policy, I am writing to express the concerns of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with more than 3.7 million members in more than 9,300 congregations across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. We urge you to oppose policies that would put our nation's most vulnerable people at risk. As a church, our congregations and nationwide social service network serve millions of the most vulnerable and we understand what is at stake. As a church, we teach that government as the guarantor of justice should "give priority to people and groups who are not benefitting from access to health care services and research: people who are uninsured and underinsured, people living in poverty, those in rural areas...." ([Caring for Health: Our Common Endeavor social statement](#), p. 19, www.elca.org/socialstatements)

Specifically, we ask you to reject provisions in the *American Health Care Act* that would convert Medicaid from a guaranteed benefit to a per capita cap program. Maintaining the structure and function of Medicaid is essential to protecting the vital function of the program. Two-thirds of seniors in nursing homes, 39 percent of American children and over ten million Americans with disabilities are covered by Medicaid. Changing the structure and function of Medicaid will put the health and well-being of these individuals at risk.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, if the *American Health Care Act* is enacted, 14 million Americans will lose Medicaid coverage over the next decade, but millions of additional Americans will feel the impact of that loss. Working families will be forced to make impossible decisions about whether to fund the care of an aging parent or care for their children. Many mothers and fathers struggling already to make ends meet will lose sleep as their children lose health care coverage. And families of people with disabilities will agonize over whether to place their loved one in an institution as the resources for home care and independent living funded by Medicaid are eliminated.

As Christians, we join with many in other religions in announcing that God calls all people and governments to do justice and to give priority to the needs of the most vulnerable people—the aging, the young, the sick and those with disabilities. Therefore, we are committed to working as a church with other individuals, organizations, and the government to ensure the continuation of Medicaid as a guaranteed benefit. Out of that commitment we urge you to reject provisions in the *American Health Care Act* that would convert Medicaid from a guaranteed benefit to a per capita cap program.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop