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March 22, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
232 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
204 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

Due to projections that enactment of the American Health Care Act (AHCA) will result in millions of Americans losing health insurance coverage, the American Medical Association (AMA) must express our opposition to the proposal currently before the House of Representatives. The need to stabilize the individual insurance market and make other improvements in the Affordable Care Act is well understood. However, as physicians, we also know that individuals who lack health insurance coverage live sicker and die younger than those with adequate coverage. We encourage all members of Congress to engage in an inclusive and thorough dialogue on appropriate remedies. We cannot, however, support legislation that would leave health insurance coverage further out of reach for millions of Americans.

Earlier this year, we shared with Congress key health reform objectives that we believe are critical to improving the health of the nation. Among these objectives are ensuring that those currently covered do not lose their coverage, maintaining market reforms, stabilizing and strengthening the individual insurance market, ensuring that low and moderate-income patients are able to secure affordable and adequate coverage, and ensuring that Medicaid and other critical safety net programs are maintained and adequately funded. While we appreciate that the bill's authors have made efforts to maintain some market reforms and that regulatory efforts are underway to strengthen the individual insurance market, as a whole the legislation falls short of the principles we previously outlined.

Health insurance coverage is critically important. Without it, millions of American families could be just one serious illness or accident away from losing their home, business, or life savings. The AMA has long supported the availability of advanceable and refundable tax credits, inversely related to income, as a means to assist individuals and families to purchase health insurance. The credits proposed under the AHCA are significantly less generous for those with the greatest need than provided under current law. The reduced purchasing power with the AHCA tax credits will put insurance coverage out of reach for millions of Americans.

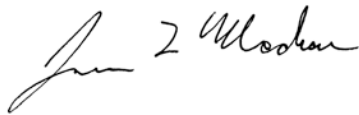
The Honorable Paul Ryan
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March 22, 2017
Page 2

We also remain deeply concerned with the reduction of federal support for the Medicaid program and the resulting significant loss of coverage. Medicaid expansion has provided access to critical services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, for millions. Not only will the AHCA force many states to roll back coverage to these millions of previously ineligible individuals, but the significant reduction in federal support for the program will inevitably have serious implications for all Medicaid beneficiaries, including the elderly, disabled, children, and pregnant women, as well.

We also continue to be concerned about provisions that eliminate important investments in public health, and those that inappropriately insert the federal government into personal decisions about where Americans are allowed to access covered health care services.

We continue to stand ready to work with Congress on proposals that will increase the number of Americans with quality, affordable health insurance coverage but for the reasons cited above, urge members to oppose the American Health Care Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim L Madara".

James L. Madara, MD