

February 16, 2017

Dear President Donald Trump, Speaker Paul D. Ryan, Secretary Tom Price, Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Lamar Alexander, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader-Elect Charles Schumer, and Representative Kevin Brady:

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has prevented thousands of U.S. citizens from experiencing financial ruin due to medical costs incurred through illness, and saved many from suffering the avoidable health consequences of untreated illness and injury. Because of crucial investments in the healthcare infrastructures of states, the ACA has also spurred economic growth in the healthcare sector, contributing to new jobs, better access, and higher quality of care for all Americans.

As medical anthropologists, we implore Congressional leaders to improve on, and not repeal, this legislation. In our research we witness first-hand the devastation done to individuals and their families and communities when they cannot access the healthcare they need or are burdened with excessive debts incurred by sky-high healthcare costs. Under the ACA, federal subsidies (or tax credits) have enabled Americans to purchase insurance through state marketplaces, Medicaid has expanded, and people with pre-existing conditions now have guaranteed access to coverage. New ACA programs have kept doctors in underserved communities and have better funded medical facilities, including community health centers and hospitals.

The elimination of such programs will undermine current access to health care. Repeal also means escalating costs and increasing pressure on medical facilities to deliver uncompensated care to a growing number of uninsured patients, thus making it harder for them to stay in business and for healthcare workers to stay employed. Good health policy protects the well-being of society's most vulnerable. We recognize access to affordable healthcare as a human right, based upon need not income.

The Society for Medical Anthropology stands ready to work with the 115th Congress and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to lead healthy, productive lives. Through our scholarship and expertise, SMA can be a strong partner in defining appropriate solutions that enable affordable access to health care for all and that work to eliminate disparities in health and healthcare. We join numerous American health organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the Consortium of Universities for Global Health, the American Hospital Association, the Federation of American Hospitals, and others, in an appeal to Congress to ensure that individuals with access to essential healthcare do not become uninsured, and to take additional steps toward enabling all Americans to get the healthcare they need.

Sincerely,

Dr. E.J. Sobo, President, Society for Medical Anthropology

Dr. Arachu Castro, President-Elect, Society for Medical Anthropology

Dr. Cathleen Willging, for the Policy Committee of the Society for Medical Anthropology



The Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA), formed in 1967 and incorporated into the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in 1971, is dedicated to the profession and practice of medical anthropology, which uses concepts and methods from anthropology to produce new understandings of health, disease, illness, treatment, and care.

Please contact the SMA at info@medanthro.net.