



June 26, 2017

Senate Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the Center for Reproductive Rights, I am writing to express strong opposition to the Better Care Reconciliation Act. By dismantling the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and ending Medicaid as we know it, this legislation pushes health care out of reach for millions of people and particularly harms women's health.

Any one of the provisions in this bill could be detrimental for women's health; and taken together, the impact would be devastating. We are especially concerned about provisions that fundamentally change the entitlement nature of Medicaid, defund Planned Parenthood, strip women of their private insurance coverage for abortion care, and threaten guaranteed Essential Health Benefits, including maternity care.

The ACA stands as one of the most important legislative advancements for women's health in decades. Under the ACA, over 55 million women have gained guaranteed coverage of preventive services without co-pays, including birth control. In 2016, 6.8 million women and girls enrolled in marketplace health plans, many of them using tax credits and subsidies to make the comprehensive coverage affordable.

On the other hand, the Better Care Reconciliation Act will significantly, and disproportionately, harm women and their families. In addition to drastically reducing our investment in Medicaid that ensures low-income people have access to health care, the bill specifically prohibits low-income patients with Medicaid coverage from receiving health care at Planned Parenthood health centers. This would block millions of Americans from accessing basic reproductive health care services like birth control and life-saving cancer screenings.

The bill singles out coverage for abortion care in the private market by prohibiting tax credits from being used to help purchase insurance in the individual market. This disincentivizes private insurance companies from offering plans that cover abortion care, including those who offer employer-sponsored plans. It will also prevent small businesses from buying insurance plans for their employees that cover abortion care – effectively banning private insurance from offering plans with abortion coverage. Congress already denies too many people access to abortion care by restricting coverage for most abortions in Medicaid and other federal programs. This measure would create a system where virtually all women in the United States –



whether they are uninsured, insured through Medicaid or another federal program, insured through the individual market, or even insured by an employer —don't have coverage for abortion services.

The bill takes aim at Essential Health Benefits, eliminating the guarantee that services like maternity care be covered. Already, the United States experiences the highest maternal mortality rate in the developing world. Yet, the U.S. could reduce a significant number of annual maternal deaths if all women—regardless of age, race, and zip code—had access to quality health care. By ending guaranteed coverage of essential health benefits in the Medicaid expansion program and allowing states more flexibility to opt out of covering those benefits in the individual market, this bill takes us away from that goal. The result could be that we slip back to a time when many pregnant women did not have coverage to help them ensure healthy pregnancies and safe deliveries, forcing them to go without care or to pay thousands of dollars in medical bills.

This bill hits women, low income families, immigrants, and people of color the hardest, including their access to essential reproductive health care. **We urge every Senator to vote no on the Better Care Reconciliation Act** and to oppose any other effort to repeal the ACA, undermine Medicaid, or cut off access to the full range of reproductive health care services.

Sincerely,

Maya Rupert
Senior Director of Policy
Center for Reproductive Rights