

March 20, 2017

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

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

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

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

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the more than 50 million American adults and children with arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation urges Congress to prioritize the needs of people with chronic disease as it continues to consider the American Health Care Act. Arthritis is a complex, chronic condition, and people with arthritis depend on access to timely, ongoing care to control their disease. For many, access to health care is the difference between being disabled and being a fully functioning member of society.

The Arthritis Foundation is encouraged to see several of our patient principles included in the American Health Care Act (AHCA) – specifically: no exclusions for people with pre-existing conditions; cost sharing that accounts for the complexities of arthritis (i.e., continued limits on patient copayments, caps on out-of-pocket costs); coverage for children on a parent's insurance until age 26; and a ban on lifetime limits. These provisions are critical to ensure arthritis patients can continue to access and afford their health care.

However, we remain concerned that some provisions of the AHCA could create access barriers to the care people with arthritis need in the following ways:

- Arthritis patients with complex care needs may have difficulty obtaining private health insurance coverage because the proposed tax credits are based on age instead of income.
- Repeal of the public health prevention fund starting in 2018, which provides funding to the Centers for Disease Control, the only organization that collects nationwide data on arthritis.
- A sunset of Essential Health Benefits (EHBs) affecting prescription drug access and outpatient care critical for arthritis patients, and disrupting care if EHBs are no longer required to be part of an insurance plan.
- Repeal of the cost-sharing subsidy may shift more cost to the patient in the form of coinsurance, reducing access to life-changing treatments.
- Medicaid policy changes could reduce or eliminate coverage for many people who rely on this program to manage their chronic disease.

The Arthritis Foundation wants to work with Congress to ensure that patients are heard as deliberations on AHCA continue to define the parameters of the new health care law. We routinely survey our patients to learn about the challenges they face and would be pleased to share information about the patient experience with you. We believe that listening to patients and examining the patient experience is critical to the success of a new health care law.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue with members of Congress in the weeks to come and hope that legislators and the administration will seek ongoing input from patients. If we can be of assistance in any way, please contact Sandie Preiss, Vice President of Advocacy and Access, at 202-887-2910 or spreiss@arthritis.org.

Sincerely,



Ann Palmer
President and CEO
Arthritis Foundation