

Americans with heart disease and stroke stand to lose under GOP's ACA repeal plan

March 9 2017

American Heart Association CEO Nancy Brown issued the following comments on the American Health Care Act, the draft legislation released by the House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means Committees:

"Americans with heart disease and stroke will not get the affordable, accessible and adequate coverage they need under the House proposal to overhaul the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As many as 15 million individuals could lose their coverage under this draft legislation, according to multiple estimates.

While we were encouraged that the legislation acknowledged the importance of preserving critical patient protections, like pre-existing conditions, our priority is the overall preservation of coverage for those insured under Medicaid and the ACA. At first glance, we are not convinced that this goal will be achieved by this proposal.

As the leading voice for cardiovascular disease (CVD) patients and their families, we are concerned that the legislation would challenge low-income individuals' ability to afford basic health insurance. Under this proposal, [health care](#) would essentially become unaffordable for those Americans because it would base tax credits on age rather than salaries, and it would repeal out-of-pocket cost-sharing subsidies that reduce the financial assistance to these individuals. Further, we are worried that the increase in the age rating ratio will significantly raise premiums for senior citizens, with minimal benefit to younger Americans. Congress

needs to remember that 50 percent of Americans aged 45-64 currently have CVD.

Of additional concern are proposed changes to Medicaid, especially since Americans with a history of CVD currently make up 28 percent of the Medicaid population. The shifting of costs from the federal government onto states, local governments, providers or beneficiaries will require states to find ways to control costs – and that could mean restricting eligibility, cutting benefits or making it even harder for those most vulnerable to enroll in general. The American Heart Association believes all of these outcomes could have an overwhelmingly negative impact on patients with CVD. What's more is eliminating the requirement that Medicaid programs cover a set of essential health benefits makes comprehensive coverage optional for these beneficiaries, which could mean that low-income patients will be insufficiently covered.

We urge Congress to develop a plan that provides affordable, accessible and adequate health care for our nation. As this legislation evolves, we will continue to measure it against the set of [Consensus Health Care Reform Principles](#) that the AHA released jointly this week with ten other [public health organizations](#). We also look forward to CBO's evaluation so we can get a better sense of the bill's impact on our patients."

Provided by American Heart Association

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