



January 9, 2017

Hon. Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, and Democratic Leaders Pelosi and Schumer:

The Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (PRA) represents hundreds of non-profit member agencies that serve tens of thousands of individuals who are most seriously impacted by mental health challenges. Our agencies work with state and county mental health authorities to provide evidence-based psychiatric rehabilitation treatment and services to children, youth and adults who benefit daily from a full array of services to assist them in living the highest quality of life possible.

Medicaid is the single largest funding source for mental health services in the United States. As safety net providers for those managing serious mental illnesses, PRA's member agencies rely on the federal share of Medicaid to fund necessary and lifesaving services. In addition to ensuring that our clients effectively manage their illnesses, we work to assist individuals and their families to become fully integrated into their communities through evidence-based services that support competitive employment, educational opportunities and safe and stable housing.

Repeal of the Affordable Care Act endangers patients and state economies

We have grave concerns that a "repeal and replace" or "repeal and delay" of the Affordable Care Act will have serious negative consequences for those individuals most in need of safety net services. The destabilizing effects of such policies on state economies will surely have onerous consequences for our most vulnerable citizens including;

1. Loss of the ability to cover the expansion population that will leave large funding gaps and uncompensated mental health and addiction care which will further burden states.
2. A loss of funding for health care that will invariably create competition for scarce dollars leading to further erosion of both mental health and addiction services.
3. Significant job loss in the health care sector.



Medicaid block grants or per capita caps place an undue burden on states and will lead to a decrease in necessary, lower cost preventive services and a higher reliance on more expensive emergent services

While we recognize the substantial budget burden that Medicaid places on both the federal and state economies, we firmly reject proposals to use block grants or per capita caps to reduce federal costs. While the argument is frequently made that these mechanisms allow for greater state flexibility, the reality is that states already enjoy tremendous flexibility in service delivery. PRA believes that through the use of evidence-based and promising practices and outcomes-focused care, not only will primary healthcare and behavioral healthcare outcomes improve, these improvements, over time, will decrease the total cost of healthcare.

Block grants/per capita caps will merely restrict access to critical safety net services throughout the country. As state and the communities struggle to manage limited funding while wrestling with expanding need due to the addiction crisis, our aging population and population growth in general, they will be forced to only serve those who find themselves in hospital emergency rooms and other high cost settings. PRA knows from experience that in these environments mental health and addiction services will invariably face significant funding cuts as states scramble to fill the funding gap that is sure to come in the wake of decisions Congress may make to block grant or place a per capita cap on Medicaid.

We urge you not to roll back the great progress that has been made in recent years in providing effective services for individuals who live with mental health conditions allowing them to remain in communities of their choice and living lives of dignity.

Sincerely,

Colleen Delaney Eubanks, CAE
CEO, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association