

January 16th, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell,
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan,
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer,
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi,
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the one in five Americans living with mental illness, the Cities Thrive Coalition is writing to highlight the immense harm that repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will cause for this population. The ACA provided the largest expansion of behavioral health services by requiring insurers to cover treatment for mental health and substance abuse disorders. This transformation in our nation's behavioral health system brought much needed care and resources to address this national crisis. While we applaud the 114th Congress for passing life-saving mental health reforms, as part of the 21st Century Cures Act, those reforms will be in vain if the ACA is repealed. Our cities have made substantial investments in groundbreaking new initiatives, to improve the access and quality of our behavioral healthcare system and repealing the ACA would cripple this progress.

Before the ACA was enacted, securing affordable coverage, even for individuals with minor mental health diagnoses, was challenging and expensive. With one in five Americans suffering from a mental health related issue, and those with mental illness disproportionately represented among the uninsured, the reforms brought about by the ACA were a monumental turning point. The ACA created numerous protections for our residents with mental illness and addiction, including:

- expanding mental health substance use disorder benefits and parity;
- providing coverage for preventive services, like screening for depression and other behavioral assessments at no additional cost;
- preventing insurers from denying coverage based upon pre-existing conditions;
- adding mental health and addiction treatment to the ten essential health benefits;
- allowing for prescription coverage for behavioral health treatments; and,
- expanding Medicaid, which has allowed 11 million people to gain access to mental health and addiction treatments.

Eliminating these reforms would create dire consequences for our cities, most vulnerable residents who would be faced with the choice of paying rent or purchasing costly private insurance.

The repeal of Medicaid expansion alone, which pays for 60% of the nation's mental health services, would be devastating to our city-led initiatives, which provide high quality care to millions of individuals in need. One in five Medicaid beneficiaries has some type of mental illness or substance abuse issue and eliminating funding or formula changes to the program would make it extremely difficult to continue at our current levels.

We are united in urging you to build upon, not tear down, the progress that has been made to our behavioral health system through the ACA. Cities are on the front lines of the fight against mental illness and substance abuse. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to continue to move our behavioral health system forward for all Americans.

Sincerely,

New York, NY, Mayor Bill de Blasio
Albany, NY, Mayor Kathy Sheehan
Alexandria, VA, Mayor Allison Silberberg
Allentown, PA, Mayor Ed Pawlowski
Atlanta, GA, Mayor Kasim Reed
Austin, TX, Mayor Steve Adler
Baltimore, MD, Mayor Catherine Pugh
Bangor, ME, Mayor Joe Baldacci
Bend, OR, Mayor Jim Clinton
Benton Harbor, MI, Mayor Marcus Muhammad
Birmingham, AL, Mayor William Bell
Bloomington, IN, Mayor John Hamilton
Boise, ID, Mayor David Bieter
Boston, MA, Mayor Martin Walsh
Bridgeport, CT, Mayor Joseph Ganim
Cambridge, MA, Mayor Denise Simmons
Carrboro, NC, Mayor Lydia Lavelle
Central Falls, RI, Mayor James Diosa
Charleston, SC, Mayor John Tecklenburg
Coconut Creek, FL, Mayor Mikkie Belvedere
Columbia, SC, Mayor Steve Benjamin
Columbus, OH, Mayor Andrew Ginther
Dallas, TX, Mayor Mike Rawlings
Davenport, IA, Mayor Frank Klipsch
Dayton, OH, Mayor Nan Whaley
Denver, CO, Mayor Michael Hancock
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Falcon Heights, MN, Mayor Peter Lindstrom
Fishers, IN, Mayor Scott Fadness

Flagstaff, AZ, Mayor Coral Evans
Gary, IN, Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson
Haledon, NJ, Mayor Domenick Stampone
Hamtramck, MI, Mayor Karen Majewski
Hartford, CT, Mayor Luke Bronin
Hempstead, NY, Mayor Wayne Hall
Hoboken, NJ, Mayor Dawn Zimmer
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Hornell, NY, Mayor Shawn D. Hogan
Jackson, MS, Mayor Tony Yarber
Jersey City, NJ, Mayor Steve Fulop
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Kansas City, KS, Mayor Mark Holland
Kansas City, MO, Mayor Sly James
Knoxville, TN, Mayor Madeline Rogero
Lansing, MI, Mayor Virgil Bernero
Laredo, TX, Mayor Pete Saenz
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Pittsburgh, PA, Mayor William Peduto
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Sacramento, CA, Mayor Darrell Steinberg
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Salt Lake City, UT, Mayor Jackie Biskupski
San Francisco, CA, Mayor Edwin Lee
San Jose, CA, Mayor Sam Liccardo
San Leandro, CA, Mayor Pauline Cutter
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Santa Monica, CA, Mayor Ted Winterer
Seattle, WA, Mayor Edward Murray
Skokie, IL, Mayor George Van Dusen
South Bend, IN, Mayor Pete Buttigieg
Springfield, MA, Mayor Domenic J. Sarno
St. Louis, MO, Mayor Francis Slay
Sunrise, FL, Mayor Michael Ryan
Surprise, AZ, Mayor Sharon Wolcott
Syracuse, NY, Mayor Stephanie Miner
Tacoma, WA, Mayor Marilyn Strickland
Tempe, AZ, Mayor Mark Mitchell
Toledo, OH, Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson

Tucson, AZ, Mayor Jonathan Rothschild
Urbana, IL, Mayor Laurel Prussing
Washington, DC, Mayor Muriel Bowser
West Carthage, NY, Mayor Scott Burto
West Hollywood, CA, Mayor Lauren Meister
West Palm Beach, FL, Mayor Jeri Muoio
Worcester, MA, Mayor Joseph Petty
York, PA, Mayor Kim Bracey

CC:

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Sen. Bob Corker
Sen. Chris Murphy
Sen. Dean Heller
Sen. Debbie Stabenow
Sen. Jeff Flake
Sen. Joseph Manchin
Sen. John McCain
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand
Sen. Lamar Alexander
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