



March 9, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear House Speaker Ryan and House Minority Leader Pelosi:

The nearly 8,000 members of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) are certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives (CNMs and CMs) who attend more than 330,000 deliveries of newborns in the United States, and provide the full range of maternal care as well as primary care for women in every state. We thank you for taking the opportunity to consider our comments to the American Health Care Act (AHCA) as proposed on March 6, 2017, in committee prints to the House Energy & Commerce and Ways & Means Committees.

The ACNM and its members stand for and with women. On their behalf, members of our organization have several specific concerns with the AHCA, and the ACNM opposes the legislation in its current form. Based on our preliminary review -- and to date without benefit of an independent Congressional Budget Office estimate of the bill's effects on costs, revenues, and covered populations -- several provisions of the AHCA would reduce access to health care and coverage for women. By eliminating maternal care as an essential health benefit all plans are required to offer, the AHCA would place women who are pregnant or wish to become pregnant at high risk of having no coverage, having no access to coverage, and of being dealt crippling out-of-pocket health costs. To the extent that such provisions drive pregnant women from the health coverage marketplace, the AHCA would further subject them to new and additional penalties for having gaps in coverage. And while the Medicaid program today covers half of the births in the United States each year and 17% of the nation's non-elderly women, the AHCA makes dramatic changes in program eligibility and in funding for states that would cover fewer beneficiaries. Together, the AHCA's changes to Medicaid put at high risk the health and health coverage of our nation's most vulnerable populations: Diminished Medicaid coverage and benefits impair women from obtaining needed pre-natal care, and would force higher lifelong health costs and detrimental societal impacts from poorer maternal and neonatal health outcomes.

Certainly the Affordable Care Act (ACA) should be examined and improved. Health care costs continue to be unacceptably high. Beneficiaries increasingly face significant point-of-care costs that discourage health care utilization even when such services are in the beneficiary's best interests. High point-of-care costs are a substantial source of dissatisfaction with the unaffordability of our health system and the ACA. Nevertheless, the ACA has also reduced the percentage of uninsured persons in the U.S. to record lows. Research has consistently shown that health coverage correlates positively with greater wellbeing, reduced risk of bankruptcy from health costs, and better health particularly for women and newborns.

We want you to know that midwives will stand for improving access to quality care and coverage for women and newborns. Research findings further demonstrate that midwives and midwifery contribute in many ways to positive health outcomes and help address the national problem of health care cost growth. As we requested in our letter of January 25, ACNM urges lawmakers to develop health care legislation in a manner that supports the significant gains made for women's health in the U.S:

- **Continue to require maternity care as an essential health benefit** all plans must cover;
- **Continue to require plans cover preventative services for women.** ACNM requests that Congress ensure women who are Medicare beneficiaries continue having their midwife-provided services covered by Medicare as they are today;
- **Support a strong Medicaid program. By covering services for women in vulnerable populations,** Medicaid not only supports better health for women and children but also reduces costs and complications associated with missing needed prenatal and postnatal care – important benefits that midwives can provide;
- **Continue to require plans cover birth control as a benefit, and the full range of reproductive and sexual health services for women.** These services are crucial for women, men and families, and sharing their costs and risks across all beneficiaries promotes health by reducing barriers to people obtaining the care that they need. As people's access to reproductive and sexual health services is so important, especially for persons within vulnerable populations, ACNM opposes efforts to render Planned Parenthood ineligible for federal funding; and,
- **Eliminate unnecessary barriers to midwifery in the health system and strengthen our health care workforce** especially in underserved parts of our country.

Putting the care of women first allows our nation to promote and improve health for entire families. Women are generally the ones to access services on behalf of their families and healthy families are the foundation for a healthy workforce and population. ACNM and its members stand ready to work with Congress and the Administration to prioritize the health care of women through improvement of laws and programs that support access to affordable coverage and excellent care midwives can provide. No reform should come at the expense of the health and wellbeing of women and newborns.

Please contact Patrick Cooney, ACNM's Federal Representative, at 202-413-2629 or via email at Patrick@federalgrp.com, if you have questions regarding midwifery care. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lisa Kane Low, CNM, PhD
President, American College of Nurse-Midwives

CC: Chairs and Ranking Members of the following committees:
House Ways and Means Committee
House Energy and Commerce Committee
House Budget Committee