

November 27, 2017

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

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

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of physicians, certified nurse-midwives/certified midwives, and nurse practitioners who provide care for the women of America, along with our patient partners, we stand together for women, children, and families in expressing opposition to the inclusion of certain health-related provisions in the Senate's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. While we appreciate that the Senate's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act preserves the student loan interest tax deduction and the medical expense tax deduction, we are concerned that other harmful provisions remain. In addition, we have concerns about the unintended consequences that this legislation would have on other health programs due to budgetary mechanisms that would be triggered by the resulting increase to the federal deficit.

We are particularly concerned with the following provisions:

- Repeal of the individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which ensures a robust and diverse risk pool in the individual insurance market. According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), repeal of the individual mandate will increase the number of uninsured Americans by 4 million in 2019 and by 13 million in 2027.ⁱ Further, CBO estimates that health insurance premiums in the individual market will rise by about 10%, putting coverage and access out of reach for more low- and middle-income Americans.ⁱⁱ Under the ACA, the uninsured rate among women ages 18-64 decreased by nearly half, from 19.3% to 10.8%. This provision threatens to reverse this positive trend.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Expansion of the prepaid tuition program enabling 529 accounts to allow an "unborn child," defined as "a child in utero...a member of the species homo sapiens, at any stage of development, who is carried in the womb," to be considered a designated beneficiary. We oppose policies that interfere with the patient-physician relationship by granting "personhood" to a fetus, or imposing legislative barriers to medical decision-making by changes in tax codes or elsewhere in federal statute or regulation. This provision does not serve to solve a problem in the tax code, but is instead a political attempt to codify "personhood" language to lay the groundwork to challenge *Roe v Wade*.

Further, we are concerned with the CBO's cost estimate for the House-passed HR 1 indicating that, if enacted, the bill would trigger a 4%, or \$25 billion cut to Medicare and additional cuts to other mandatory spending programs, including the Prevention and Public Health Fund.^{iv} A cut of this magnitude would put in jeopardy access to care for seniors. We implore the Senate to ensure that these cuts don't go into effect, and instead work with us to strengthen the Medicare program.

We urge you to remove the harmful provisions and ensure that tax reform does not come at the expense of access to health care, or create dangerous new precedents in the tax code. Instead, we hope to work with you on bipartisan efforts to strengthen our health care system for all Americans.

Sincerely,

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health

National Partnership for Women & Families

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

ⁱ Congressional Budget Office, *Repealing the Individual Health Insurance Mandate: An Updated Estimate* (November 2017), <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53300-individualmandate.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Simmons, A et. al. The Affordable Care Act: Promoting Better Health for Women. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Issue Brief. Department of Health and Human Services. June 14, 2016. Available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/205066/ACAWomenHealthIssueBrief.pdf>.

^{iv} Congressional Budget Office, letter to the Honorable Steny H. Hoyer providing an estimate on the effects of legislation that would raise deficits by an estimated \$1.5 trillion over the 2018-2027 period (November 13, 2017), <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/hr1hoyerletter.pdf>.