



May 15, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester
 U.S. House of Representatives
 1519 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Blunt Rochester:

The 23 undersigned organizations, representing millions of American patients and consumers, write today in strong support of a provision included in H.R. 987 that would require the Department of Health and Human Services to resume activities related to outreach and educational activities for open enrollment.

In March 2017, we identified three overarching principles to guide and measure any work to further reform and improve the nation’s health insurance system. Our core principles are that health insurance coverage must be adequate, affordable, and accessible.¹ Together, our organizations understand what individuals and families need to prevent disease, manage health, and cure illness. Our organizations are deeply concerned

¹ Health care reform principles. American Heart Association website. http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@adv/documents/downloadable/ucm_495416.pdf.

about the lack of investment in promoting open enrollment as well as the Administration's efforts to expand and promote short-term plans and other substandard coverage. Therefore, we are pleased that this legislation would require the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct outreach and educational activities so that consumers, including those with pre-existing conditions, are aware of their healthcare options, like high-quality plans that are compliant with the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Over the last two years, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) funding for open enrollment education and outreach programs has been cut by 90 percent. These critical programs are necessary to ensure individuals are aware of the open enrollment period and their health care coverage options. With the increase of non-ACA compliant coverage options, such as short-term, limited-duration and association health plans, resources for education and outreach is particularly important to allow uninsured individuals to make informed decisions about their coverage options. We are alarmed that since the reduction in funding allocated for the programs, enrollment dropped for the first time since the introduction of the ACA.

We support your legislation to restore funding for CMS education and outreach programs to the levels set by the ACA. Informed enrollees can choose plans that provide the coverage they need at prices they can afford. We also believe that this legislation can help stabilize the ACA exchanges. People with pre-existing conditions need access to adequate and affordable health insurance. In order to be accessible, potential enrollees need to understand open enrollment and coverage options. This legislation will keep this information accessible to all.

Again, our organizations thank you for your leadership on this critical issue for people with pre-existing conditions, and we support your efforts to expand access to affordable health insurance. We look forward to working with you and Congress to expand access to high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society
Cancer Action Network
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Arthritis Foundation
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
Hemophilia Federation of America
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lutheran Services in America
Mended Little Hearts
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Health Council
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Kidney Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders

National Patient Advocate Foundation

National Psoriasis Foundation

Susan G. Komen

WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease