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Amida Care Denounces House Passage of the Disastrous American Health Care Act

Washington, D.C. (May 5, 2017)—On May 4, the House of Representatives voted for the American Health Care Act (AHCA), a bill that would set back efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic and be catastrophic for millions of people with chronic conditions while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. If the bill is signed into law, millions of Americans may find themselves priced out of coverage and discriminated against for their age, gender, or pre-existing conditions. The AHCA would end Medicaid expansion, relying on ineffective high-risk pools, which would cause approximately 24 million Americans to lose health coverage. The legislation repeals tax hikes imposed by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on high-income households, which would have funded insurance subsidies and other provisions.

“Taking health insurance away from millions of people to give tax cuts to millionaires will not make America great. Hard-working Americans shouldn’t be forced into poverty because they are unable to afford care,” said Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care. “Amida Care calls on the Senate to reject the AHCA and to stand up for the affordable, quality health care that millions of Americans with pre-existing conditions—including people living with HIV—deserve.”

The AHCA has the potential to take people living with chronic conditions like HIV back to the days when they were denied or could not afford health insurance coverage. Without regular, comprehensive health care, people with chronic conditions are hospitalized and visit the emergency room more frequently, require costly nursing homes, rack up high bills, and get pushed into poverty. Those burdensome costs are ultimately passed on to the government, insurers, and taxpayers.

High-risk pools have repeatedly failed to provide affordable, quality coverage for people living with HIV and other pre-existing or chronic conditions. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, 35 states had high-risk pools with waiting lists and inadequate coverage. Coverage in high-risk pools often has excessively high premiums, deductibles, and co-pays along with limitations on eligibility for needed drug coverage and care. The AHCA would take away coverage from Medicaid recipients in states that have expanded Medicaid and make it more difficult for children to be covered by Medicaid by lowering their eligibility. And, unlike our current Medicaid system, a capped or block granted program can’t be scaled flexibly, without legislative action, to address changing health care needs during crises. This will ultimately cost the United States more money in future hospitalizations and other expenses.

Mike Pence knows the importance of Medicaid expansion first-hand. As governor of Indiana, Pence slashed state health spending, eliminating Scott County Planned Parenthood – the only place for residents of this rural area to get tested for HIV. Shortly afterwards, their HIV epidemic spiraled out of control, with 20 new cases of HIV being diagnosed each week. In this time of crisis, Pence turned to Obamacare’s expanded Medicaid program to help Scott County residents get medical care, HIV tests, and substance abuse treatment, which worked to curb the outbreak and eventually brought the number of new infections down to zero.

Access to health care for all is a win-win for everyone. Health care is a fundamental human right—a right, not a privilege. Amida Care urges the Senate to seek bipartisan solutions to improve the health care system and ensure that quality care is affordable and accessible for all our citizens.

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