

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete King
339 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dan Donovan
1541 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John J. Faso
1616 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elise M. Stefanik
318 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Claudia Tenney
512 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Reed
2437 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Katko
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Collins
1117 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2017

Dear Representatives,

We, the undersigned organizations, representing nearly 8,000 physicians and medical students in New York, share a dedication to improving the health and economic security of all New Yorkers.

We are writing to ask you to forcefully oppose healthcare cuts within the 2018 House budget resolution (H.Con.Res.71) passed today. We wanted to thank those of you who did the right thing and opposed this harmful budget, and ask all of you to stand together as the budget moves forward.

The current resolution – and a similar measure in the Senate – contains massive and draconian cuts to the Medicaid and Medicare programs. In exchange for trillions of dollars in tax cuts that would overwhelmingly benefit the wealthy and large corporations, the budget resolution slashes Medicaid by over a trillion dollars and Medicare by almost half a trillion dollars over the next decade.

To pay for unnecessary tax cuts for the richest one percent, these proposals are designed to reduce federal financial support to state Medicaid programs, which would be detrimental to the 6 million New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid to access medical and long-term care. Massive cuts to Medicaid would harm middle class New Yorkers economically, and would seriously threaten

the healthcare of poorer citizens across the state. It is astounding that such cuts to critical health programs are even being considered just after support for the State Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and Disproportionate Share (DSH) funding were all allowed to lapse due to Congressional inaction. CHIP provides healthcare for over 300,000 children in New York. There are over 600 FQHCs in the state, providing care for over 200,000 people. DSH funding provides a lifeline to numerous safety net hospitals across the state. These three programs alone comprise a large portion of New York's healthcare safety net. Adding cuts to Medicaid and Medicare to this rapidly growing healthcare funding crisis would surely decimate the state's healthcare system. And reauthorizing these programs at the expense of Medicaid or other vital public health programs, like the Prevention and Public Health Fund, simply moves the pain around in order to benefit the wealthy.

As you know, Medicaid is currently a joint federal- and state-financed program that supports children, low income adults, and individuals with disabilities of all ages by paying for their health care and long-term services and supports, and by providing essential federal protections for Medicare beneficiaries with low incomes and assets. The majority (60%) of Medicaid spending in New York is on the elderly and disabled, even though they represent less than 24% of beneficiaries.¹ As with most states, Medicaid also serves as the *de facto* long-term care program for the state's seniors.

According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, "Nearly \$34 billion in federal Medicaid dollars represent, by far, the biggest share of the \$54 billion in total federal aid received by the state."² Cuts in Medicaid funding would therefore be devastating for patients in New York and our state's budget. While the current budget resolutions do not allow for specific state-by-state estimates, it is certain that New York State would lose tens of billions of dollars in Medicaid funding alone over the next decade.

To make up for this loss of Medicaid funding, New York State would have to contribute much more of its own funding or make deep cuts to eligibility, benefits, and provider payments, with those cuts likely growing more severe each year. Many New Yorkers would surely lose health insurance coverage under such a scenario, likely numbering in the millions, with hundreds of thousands of these people living in your Congressional districts.

Medicaid coverage is especially important for older adults and people with disabilities who need services not covered by Medicare, who cannot afford Medicare premiums and cost-sharing, who require mental health care or addiction treatment, and who live in rural communities. The substantial cuts to Medicaid proposed in the 2018 House budget resolution would therefore cruelly target the most vulnerable people in our society, leaving children, the elderly, the

¹ https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/health/medicaid_2015.pdf

² <http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Federal-Funding-Brief.pdf>

mentally ill and disabled, and the poor without healthcare coverage and vital services. It is disturbing that we would consider restricting coverage for addiction treatment just as the country and the state are trying to recover from an opioid addiction epidemic, on the same day that the White House declared it a public health emergency. Some of your districts have among the highest overdose death rates in New York.

Almost 2.3 million children in New York State receive their health care through Medicaid. Medicaid has served America's children for more than 50 years, and plays a central role in our nation's successful efforts to decrease the number of uninsured children to an all-time low of 5%. Children in the New York Medicaid program receive a full range of benefits, including early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment (EPSDT), hospital visits, clinic services, and dental and vision services. Medicaid eligibility during childhood leads to better health across the lifespan and reduced mortality. At this critical time, we cannot afford to lose the enormous gains we have made for New York's children.

Cutting Medicaid would also have a negative impact on New York's economy. By covering health care services for individuals who could not otherwise afford them, Medicaid provides income and jobs to hospitals, private physicians, and other health care providers. Rural and safety net hospitals, in particular, could be financially devastated by loss of reimbursement for care they provide. The Commonwealth Fund had estimated that New York State would lose 131,000 jobs under previous *Affordable Care Act (ACA)* repeal proposals, about 42,000 of which would come from your districts.³ There is good reason to believe that economic damage would be even worse under the 2018 House budget resolution.

Devastating our health care system in this way would do no good at all. New York has a record of successful partnerships with the federal government to improve access, reduce costs, improve quality, and save money. The state's current Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program is a testament to how much money can be saved through thoughtful and well-designed reforms, rather than blunt and ill-designed cuts at the federal level. We would hope that New York State's innovations could be incorporated into thoughtful, bipartisan efforts to improve the ACA.

As physicians, we took an oath to put the health of our patients first. **Simply put, this budget resolution will endanger the care of thousands of New Yorkers and will be responsible for many deaths in our state.** Trust that we will be paying close attention to the decisions of our members of Congress, taking note of whose side you are on, and speaking out to protect our patients and communities. We thank those of you who stood with constituents and voted against the budget resolution. We noticed that some of you voted for the 2018 House budget resolution, and we hope that you will make a better decision as legislation moves forward. Remember that

³ <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2017/jan/repealing-federal-health-reform>

doctors feel a strong sense of moral obligation to those we serve, and as a result, have earned the respect and attention of the public. We therefore request that you vote against any plan that results in significant cuts to Medicaid, which would threaten the lives of our patients, and severely damage our communities and the state of New York.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Clifford
Doctors Council SEIU

Bruce Rector, MD and Katherine Scheirman, MD
Co-Directors, Doctors for America - New York State

Camille A. Clare, MD, MPH
President, Manhattan Central Medical Society

Marc Manseau, MD and Aaron Fox, MD, MS
Co-Chairs, National Physicians Alliance New York

Cappy Collins, MD, MPH
NYS Pediatric Advocacy Coalition

Oliver Fein, MD
Chair, Physicians for a National Health Program, New York Metro Chapter

Andrew Goldstein, MD
Progressive Doctors

The above organizations are collaborating together as @NYDocs