



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
Governor

December 27, 2016

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-107, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McCarthy:

I write to share with you information about the critical role that the Affordable Care Act has played in New Hampshire in improving access to health care and health insurance, strengthening the quality of care, addressing our opioid crisis, stabilizing costs, and empowering individuals and businesses across New Hampshire.

Largely as a result of changes made possible by the Affordable Care Act, New Hampshire's uninsured rate fell from 12 percent of the population in 2012 to 6 percent of the population in 2015, and that number appears to continue to decline. That translates into tens of thousands of our citizens with new access to health care. In addition, both the newly insured and the previously insured now often have higher-quality health care, including affordable access to preventative care – for example, reproductive health care. The Affordable Care Act's parity requirements have also led to crucial improvements in access to behavioral health services.

With the increase in the number of insured, New Hampshire has also seen an increase in health insurance competition. For years, people in New Hampshire had few choices. When the exchange first opened, New Hampshire had only one insurer offering policies. This year, there are four. Between 2016 and 2017, New Hampshire also had the second-lowest increase in the country for the "benchmark" silver plan used to compare all states, just 2 percent.

The increase in the number of insured has also helped to stabilize our hospitals, reduce uncompensated care costs and reduce the cost-shifting that had traditionally been borne by employers that offered their workers commercial insurance.

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More than 51,000 New Hampshire citizens are currently enrolled in the New Hampshire Health Protection Plan, New Hampshire's bipartisan version of Medicaid expansion. Since its inception, less than three years ago, the NH Health Protection Plan has served more than 107,000 individuals. It has served as an important bridge for people who do not have, or cannot afford, work-based insurance coverage. The NH Health Protection Plan has also been crucial in helping address New Hampshire's opioid crisis, a public health emergency in our state and in many others.

The New Hampshire Health Protection Plan has helped make it possible for thousands of our citizens to directly access substance misuse disorder treatment services. In addition, the coverage requirements in the ACA have made it financially possible for new treatment providers to open their doors. In short, the Affordable Care Act and the New Hampshire Health Protection Plan are cornerstones of our state's efforts to combat this crisis. For example, our Corrections Department has instituted a pilot program to pre-enroll inmates in the New Hampshire Health Protection Program and provide long-acting naltrexone to inmates as they prepare to transition back into the community. The assurance of ongoing coverage for treatment is the only thing that makes this pilot possible. In addition, we are currently expanding drug courts to all of New Hampshire's counties. Drug courts can only be successful if individuals can access substance misuse treatment on a regular basis.

Repealing the Affordable Care Act without a truly effective replacement in place would throw tens of thousands of New Hampshire families into uncertainty. It would also severely disrupt our health insurance marketplace – potentially leading to fewer choices and increased rates. It would also destabilize our health care providers, and the threatened loss of insurance coverage could potentially halt the development of new substance abuse treatment alternatives.

In New Hampshire, we came together across party lines to develop the New Hampshire Health Protection Program. It enjoys broad support from Democrats, Republicans, Independents, the business community, law enforcement, judges and health care providers – as well as the tens of thousands of individuals it serves – because it is working to make a positive difference in our state.

I would be remiss as well if I did not also mention our deep concerns with proposals to turn Medicaid into a block-grant program. This proposal will result in the shifting of costs to states, and could jeopardize health care for our most vulnerable citizens, particularly people with disabilities and the elderly.

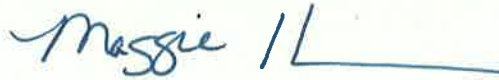
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As an incoming member of the U.S. Senate, I certainly recognize that there are areas where the ACA can be improved. For example, I support repealing the Cadillac and medical device taxes. But the ACA's basic framework of ensuring access to quality, affordable health insurance for New Hampshire citizens must be maintained.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maggie" followed by a stylized "H" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor