



AMERICA'S ESSENTIAL HOSPITALS

October 20, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Representative Pelosi:

On behalf of America's Essential Hospitals, it's more than 250 member hospitals and health systems, and the millions of people we serve every year, **I am writing to express my grave concern regarding budget reconciliation legislation being considered in the House of Representatives.** America's Essential Hospitals is the leading association and champion for hospitals and health systems dedicated to high-quality care for all, including the most vulnerable. Our members are vital to their communities, providing primary care through trauma care, disaster response, health professional training, research, public health programs, and other services.

The budget reconciliation legislation before the House includes a number of provisions that we believe would damage the ability of all people – particularly the low-income and vulnerable – to access high quality health care. While **we appreciate the legislation's inclusion of a repeal of the Independent Advisory Board**, which could usurp Congress' authority over health care entitlements, there are five provisions in the legislation that we oppose as written:

While America's Essential Hospitals does not have a formal position on either the individual or employer mandates, **we steadfastly support policies that promote health care coverage.** We know that health care coverage – whether it be through employer-based insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, through an exchange, or in another venue – ultimately promotes access to care and saves lives. Independent analysts have consistently found that repeal of the individual and employer mandates would significantly erode coverage. **Without provisions to retain coverage for affected individuals, we believe Congress should reconsider eliminating the mandates.**

America's Essential Hospitals firmly opposes repeal of the Prevention and Public Health Fund. The fund represents a significant and needed investment in prevention and public health, particularly for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which receives more than 90 percent of the fund's resources. In 2015 the fund provided (among other items):

- one-third of the funding for the CDC's immunization programs
- all of the funding for state block grants to detect and respond to infectious diseases
- half of the funding for CDC efforts to prevent heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

We strongly urge Congress to protect this vital source of funding.

Finally, in an effort to prohibit funding to a specific health care provider, the reconciliation bill would amend Medicaid statute in an unprecedented way. In what is known as the "any willing provider" provision, federal Medicaid law allows beneficiaries to receive services from any provider that is qualified to perform the service or services. This provision – which has never been waived for fee-for-service population – promotes access care for beneficiaries in a program that all too often lacks adequate access due, in part, to inadequate reimbursement. **By undermining this critical protection, the reconciliation legislation would set a destabilizing precedent that could lead to further restrictions to access for our nation's most vulnerable people.**

America's Essential Hospitals appreciates the opportunity to provide our thoughts on the pending reconciliation legislation. **We strongly urge you to reconsider this bill and work with all stakeholders to find consensus-based innovative ways to reduce health care spending without damaging access to care for millions of people.**

Sincerely,

Bruce Siegel, MD, MPH
President and CEO