



March 1, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairwoman Foxx:

Thank you for your efforts to make healthcare affordable and accessible for all Americans. As the Committee on Education and the Workforce prepares to hold a briefing on this important topic, the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) welcomes the opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation's healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century health system that makes affordable, high quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC—hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, biotech firms, health product distributors, pharmacies, post-acute care providers, and information technology companies—are committed to advancing a consumer-centered healthcare system that values innovation, affordability, and accessibility.

HLC conducted research in the early 2000s to identify the barriers small businesses face in offering health insurance coverage. Survey after survey found that while cost is one barrier, it is not the only one. Another significant barrier is knowledge and understanding of how health insurance works. During its research, HLC provided a short 15-minute educational session on insurance to small business owners through the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs). These sessions led to an increase in knowledge about health insurance as well as an increase in the propensity by the small business owner to offer health insurance. These owners do not have large human resource departments that can explain all their health plan options to them and their employees. These consumers must be provided with decision support tools—including out of pocket cost calculators, smart plan-finder tools, searchable online provider networks and drug formularies, and clear cost information for common services—that will help them to understand their options and choose among plans. H.R. 1101, the Small Business Health Fairness Act, would allow small businesses to join together through association health plans (AHPs). HLC urges the Committee to ensure that the AHPs provide small businesses with the decision support tools necessary to compare their healthcare options.

HLC also understands the importance of ensuring that self-insured companies are able to continue to provide coverage to their employees. The Self-Insurance Protection Act would clarify that federal regulators cannot redefine stop loss insurance as health insurance. Stop loss insurance provides self-insured plans with a financial backstop to reimburse the employer or the plan for catastrophic claims. HLC thanks the Committee for its efforts to give self-insured companies this flexibility and protection.

HLC has long been a supporter of employee wellness programs. Much of the illness and early death related to chronic diseases is caused by modifiable health risk behaviors such as lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use. By 2020, the number of Americans with one or more of these illnesses will reach 157 million. HLC's member companies are at the forefront of working to reverse this trend by developing and implementing programs that give employees access to the tools, resources, and incentives to empower behavior change that will reduce, delay, or eliminate the impact of chronic disease. These efforts are described in HLC's compendium, [The Future is Here](#), and HLC and its member companies strongly supported the bipartisan Affordable Care Act (ACA) provision that increased the ability of employers to vary premiums up to 50% based on participation in a wellness program. We are pleased that the Preserving Employee Wellness Programs Act clarifies that these discounts, rebates, and modifications do not violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

Thank you again for your work to make healthcare affordable and accessible. HLC looks forward to continuing to work with you. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Withey at (202) 449-3435.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary R. Grealy".

Mary R. Grealy
President