



January 28, 2019

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady:

Thank you for holding a hearing on “Protecting Americans with Pre-Existing Conditions.” The Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) appreciates the opportunity to share its thoughts with you on this important issue.

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 healthcare 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, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, post-acute care providers, home care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient-centered approach.

HLC has long supported access to health coverage for all Americans. The consequences of being without health insurance are beyond debate. As noted by the Kaiser Family Foundation last month, going without coverage can have serious health consequences for the uninsured because they receive less preventive care, and delayed care often results in serious illness or other health problems. Being uninsured also can have serious financial consequences.

The societal costs are significant as well. People without health coverage are more likely to go without preventive or diagnostic care, and thus, when they need medical assistance, it’s frequently in expensive emergency room or acute care settings.

Healthcare costs are higher for all Americans because of the uncompensated care provided by physicians, hospitals, and clinics.

Roughly fifty-two percent of adults aged 18-64 have a preexisting condition ranging from life threatening illnesses like cancer to chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or asthma. As discussions around health coverage occur, HLC supports efforts to maintain continuous coverage for all Americans that include protections for individuals with preexisting conditions. We would suggest that Congress consider improvements to current coverage options to ensure stability in the individual insurance marketplace. These could include:

- Establishing a permanent federal reinsurance program to prevent premium increases in the individual insurance market by offsetting the expense of high-cost individuals.
- Encouraging states to establish their own reinsurance programs.
- Reinstating cost sharing reductions for lower income families and make them available to those with incomes above 250 percent of the FPL.
- Increasing federal funding for outreach and awareness during open enrollment period.
- Fix the family glitch in which the cost to add family members to an individuals employer-sponsored health insurance is not considered when determining “affordability.”

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns regarding protecting American’s with preexisting conditions. HLC looks forward to continuing to collaborate with you on this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Witchey at (202) 449-3435 or dwitchey@hlc.org.

Sincerely,



Mary R. Grealy
President