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National HCH Council Responds to Recent Proposed Federal Health Reform Legislation

Nashville, TN: In response to recent proposals to modify the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the National Health Care for the Homeless Council urges policymakers to enact legislation guided by principles which would increase access to quality health care for all Americans, regardless of income or housing status.

“As a voice for patients and for providers of homeless health care, we draw from 30 years of experience to affirm that high-quality health care systems aim to establish universal eligibility to comprehensive coverage, eliminate barriers to coverage and care, and address social determinants of health to deliver the best outcomes at the least cost,” said Bobby Watts, NHCHC Chief Executive Officer.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly stated that he wishes to establish “insurance for everybody” — coverage which is both less expensive and more effective. The Council supports this aim and notes that while a single-payer system would be the most efficient, cost-effective model to achieve this goal, the recent expansion of Medicaid under the ACA has filled critical coverage gaps and should be implemented in all states.

Nearly 16 million Americans gained Medicaid coverage since 2014 through the expansion, including many patients without homes. As noted in a [recent Council brief](#), Health Care for the Homeless patients are nearly five times more likely to have gained insurance since 2013 if they lived in an expansion state. This coverage is often essential to achieving greater health and stability, according to Council Senior Director of Policy Barbara DiPietro.

“Medicaid is the difference between life and death for some of our clients,” said DiPietro. “In the words of a clinician, ‘Patients interviewed universally say, ‘I would have died—and will die without it.’”

In our pursuit to preserve this crucial coverage, we have noted the recent words of HHS Secretary Tom Price and CMS Administrator Seema Verma, whose [letter](#) to state Governors stated a wish to address Medicaid’s challenges through solutions “improving quality, accessibility, and outcomes in the most cost-effective manner” while taking into account the unique needs of Medicaid-eligible populations—a group which would include the needs of people without homes.

The Council is committed to working with policymakers to enact meaningful reforms guided by principles which would preserve and expand Medicaid, create true health care equity, and help address the crisis of American homelessness.

“The time has never been more right or the need greater to demonstrate our commitment as a nation to the principle that health care is a human right,” said Watts.

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About the National Health Care for the Homeless Council

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council is a network of doctors, nurses, social workers, patients, and advocates who share the mission to eliminate homelessness. Since 1986 we have been the leading organization to call for comprehensive health care and secure housing for all. We produce leading research in the field and provide the highest level of training and resources related to care for persons experiencing homelessness. We collaborate with government agencies and private institutions in order to solve complex problems associated with homelessness. Additionally, we provide support to more than 200 public health centers and Health Care for the Homeless programs in all 50 states. Learn more at www.nhchc.org.