

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Director Mick Mulvaney  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear President Trump:

We are writing to express our grave concern about the impact that your proposed cuts to Medicaid would have on America's veterans and their access to health care. During your campaign and since you assumed office, you have repeatedly promised to "get our veterans the care they need wherever and whenever they need it."<sup>1</sup> Preserving Medicaid is essential to keeping this promise. While many veterans can get health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly two million veterans – one out of every ten – rely on Medicaid for health coverage.<sup>2</sup>

Your budget proposal and support for the American Health Care Act (AHCA) do not live up to your promise to ensure that veterans have access to the care they need. The AHCA would repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), ripping away care from 23 million Americans and slashing Medicaid by \$834 billion.<sup>3</sup> Because of the ACA, the uninsured rate for veterans decreased by almost 40 percent,<sup>4</sup> and 340,000 of the veterans now enrolled in Medicaid receive coverage through the ACA's Medicaid expansion,<sup>5</sup> which the AHCA would eliminate. Your FY2018 budget proposes over \$610 billion in additional cuts to Medicaid.<sup>6</sup> These "draconian"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alicia Adamczyk, "Thousands of Veterans and Their Families would Lose Insurance under the AHCA," *Time.com* (March 15, 2017) (online at: <http://time.com/money/4699647/gop-health-care-plan-veterans/>).

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Callow, "Cutting Medicaid Would Hurt Veterans," *Families USA* (May 2017) (online at: <http://familiesusa.org/product/cutting-medicaid-would-hurt-veterans>).

<sup>3</sup> Congressional Budget Office, "Cost Estimate: H.R. 1628: American Health Care Act of 2017 as Passed by the House of Representatives on May 4, 2017" (May 24, 2017) (online at: <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/hr1628aspassed.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Haley, Genevieve Kennedy, Jason Gates, "Veterans Saw Broad Coverage Gains Between 2013 and 2015," *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Urban Institute* (April 2017) (online at: <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89756/2001230-veterans-saw-broad-coverage-gains-between-2013-and-2015.pdf>).

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Callow, *supra*.

<sup>6</sup> President Trump's FY2018 budget request for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (May 23, 2017) (online at: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy2018-budget-in-brief.pdf>).

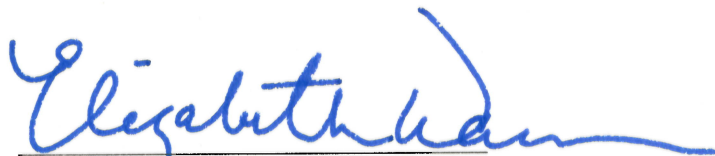
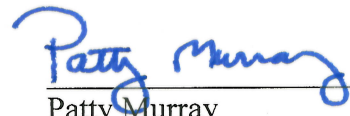


<sup>7</sup> Mathew Rozsa, "Death by a Thousand Cuts: Trump's Budget will Destroy Social Safety Net," *Salon* (May 23, 2017) (online at: <http://www.salon.com/2017/05/23/death-by-a-thousand-cuts-trumps-budget-will-destroy-social-safety-net/>).

cuts to the nation's social safety net are an "assault"<sup>8</sup> on veterans and their families – and on millions of other Americans.

Although your proposed budget would gut many programs important to veterans, including student loan funding, nutrition assistance, and disability payments, cuts to Medicaid would be particularly devastating. In addition to physical health problems, such as chronic pain and traumatic brain injury (TBI), veterans struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorder (SUD) at higher rates than the general population.<sup>9</sup> Your budget states that it would "increas[e] the focus on serious mental illness," but it strips nearly \$400 million away from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and flat-funds key initiatives for fighting the opioid epidemic. To make matters worse, you also want to slash funding for the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute on Drug Abuse by 20 percent, cutting them by \$301 million and \$210 million, respectively.<sup>10</sup> These institutes provide crucial support for research and development on TBI, PTSD, and SUD.

Your proposed cuts to Medicaid and your efforts to take away people's health coverage are inconsistent with the promises you made to America's veterans. They deserve better. We urge you to consider the impacts that gutting Medicaid would have on the lives and health of those who have sacrificed so much in service to our nation.

Sincerely,

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator  
Patty Murray  
United States Senator  
Jack Reed  
United States Senator  
Bill Nelson  
United States Senator

<sup>8</sup> "Trump's Assault on Working Voters," *Baltimore Sun* (May 22, 2017) (online at: <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-trump-budget-20170522-story.html>).

<sup>9</sup> Terri Tanielian, Lisa H. Jaycox (editors), "Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery," *RAND Corporation* (2008) (online at: [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG720.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG720.pdf)); Maria Olenick, Monica Flowers, Valerie J Diaz, "US Veterans and Their Unique Issues: Enhancing Health Care Professional Awareness," *Adv. Med. Educ. Pract.* 2015; 6: 635–639; doi: 10.2147/AMEP.S89479; Emily Wax-Thibodeaux, "New Rules on Narcotic Painkillers Cause Grief for Veterans and VA," *Washington Post* (February 18, 2015) (online at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/veterans-struggle-to-renew-their-prescriptions-amid-new-opioid-rules/2015/02/18/4d42d63a-acb3-11e4-9c91-e9d2f9fde644\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.5b4ab40d0765](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/veterans-struggle-to-renew-their-prescriptions-amid-new-opioid-rules/2015/02/18/4d42d63a-acb3-11e4-9c91-e9d2f9fde644_story.html?utm_term=.5b4ab40d0765)); National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health, "NIH Analysis Shows Americans are in Pain" (August 11, 2015) (online at: <https://nccih.nih.gov/news/press/08112015>).

<sup>10</sup> President Trump's FY2018 budget request, *supra*.



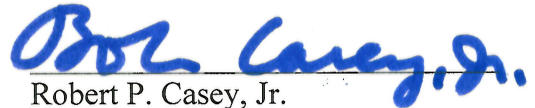
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



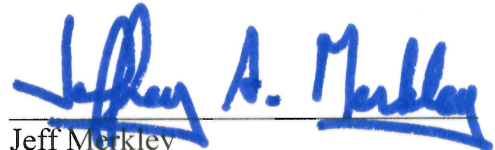
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



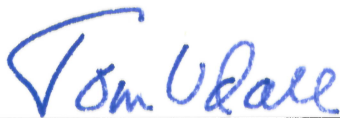
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



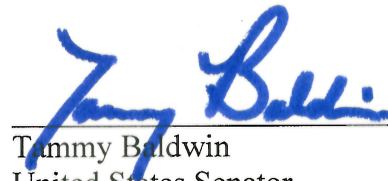
Tom Udall  
United States Senator



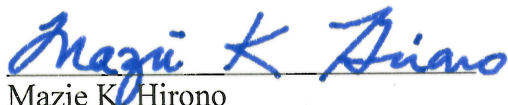
Al Franken  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Tommy Baldwin  
United States Senator

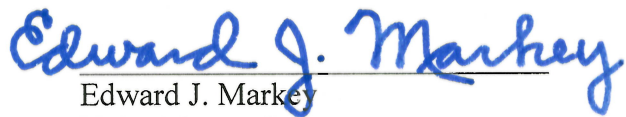


Mazie Hirono  
United States Senator

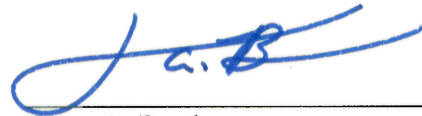


Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

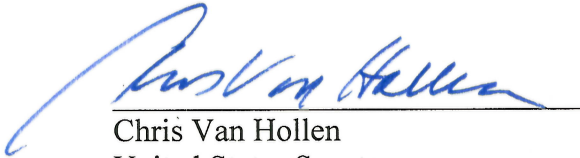




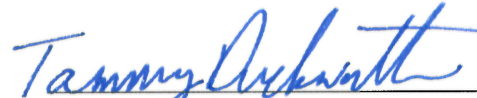
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



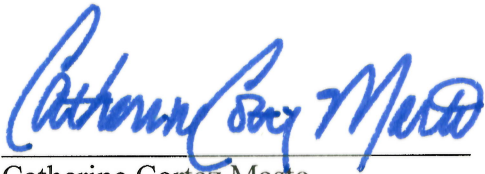
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



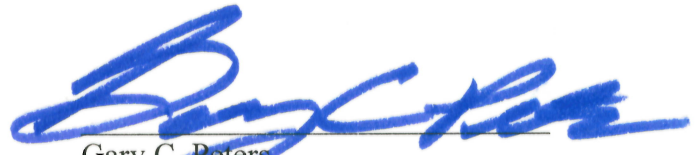
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

CC:

Secretary Tom Price, Department of Health and Human Services  
Secretary David Shulkin, Department of Veterans Affairs