

## Letter to Congress on the Affordable Care Act from the ACP

*The following letter was sent by Rhode Island physician **Nitin S. Damle, MD, MS, MACP**, president of the American College of Physicians (ACP) on Jan. 3.*



Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Michael Enzi, and Ranking Member Bernie Sanders:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express our strong concern that the Senate version of the budget resolution for fiscal year 2017 will start a process that could result in repeal of essential coverage and consumer protections established by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) while destabilizing coverage in the meantime, resulting in tens of millions of Americans losing coverage, benefits, and other protections established by current law.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 148,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

The ACP has long supported the goal of universal health coverage. While we acknowledge that the ACA is not perfect (and no law is) and improvements to it can and should be made, our continued support for the ACA is grounded in the fact that it has reduced the uninsured rate to the lowest ever, a major stride toward providing affordable coverage to all Americans. The ACA also ensures key consumer protections for all Americans, including the prohibition against insurers turning down, charging higher premiums, or canceling coverage for 52 million people, one out of 4 Americans, who have pre-existing medical conditions; prohibiting insurers from putting annual or lifetime limits on coverage, and ensuring coverage of essential medical services including no-cost preventive services – protections that apply to just about every American, not just those who get coverage directly from programs created by the ACA.

The congressional leadership's expressed goal is to follow up on the budget resolution by passing a budget reconciliation package that would repeal these and other key parts of the ACA, while delaying the date when they would

sunset to sometime in the future, during which Congress would strive to develop a replacement plan. However, independent and non-partisan analyses show that enactment of such a "repeal, delay and replace" bill, especially without an alternative being offered now that could be thoroughly evaluated based on its impact on quality, access, and coverage,

would create chaos in insurance markets, causing plans to pull out of the markets with more than 7 million losing coverage in 2017 alone; full repeal could result in nearly 60 million people becoming uninsured.

Accordingly, our commitment to ensuring that patients have access to affordable coverage and medical care obligates us to urge the Senate to vote no on the budget resolution.

While we cannot support the budget resolution, the College welcomes dialogue on constructive, bipartisan approaches to improve on the ACA by making coverage even more affordable and accessible, including ideas to stabilize insurance markets by bringing more young people into them without disadvantaging older and sicker patients; expand consumer choice of insurance products and of physician and hospitals; ensure network adequacy; support state innovation including in Medicaid provided that current eligibility, benefits, and protections for current and future enrollees are not undermined, reduce administrative burdens on physicians and their patients, and support the critical role played by primary care physicians in providing accessible, high quality and cost-effective care to all types of patients. We encourage Congress to first put forward such ideas for review and consideration rather than committing to a process that would repeal the ACA's coverage and protections for many millions of people.

Thank you for your consideration and the College looks forward to working with you and the Senate as you move ahead with these important issues.

Sincerely,  
Nitin S. Damle, MD, MS, MACP  
President