



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

May 9, 2019

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic hospitals, nursing homes, indigent care clinics, long-term care facilities, systems, sponsors, and related organizations serving the full continuum of health care across our nation, I would like to express our support for H.R. 986, the Protecting Americans with Pre-Existing Conditions Act of 2019. This legislation will be considered as part of the FY2019 supplemental appropriations legislation (HR 2157).

CHA has long worked for policies to make comprehensive health care affordable and accessible to everyone and is strongly committed to ensuring that coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is available, affordable, stable and meaningful. Last year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued guidance modifying the process for determining if states' requests for waivers of ACA requirements meet statutory protections intended to ensure that state waiver programs (known as section 1332) maintain coverage options that provide at least the level of access and affordability required under the ACA. At that time, we urged CMS to withdraw this guidance. We support states having the flexibility to find innovative ways to achieve the ACA's coverage objectives. However, we were very concerned that the CMS guidance would allow states to include in their programs insurance plans that are exempt from important consumer protections, including pre-existing condition exclusions, resulting in fewer people having access to affordable, meaningful and comprehensive coverage. We believe this outcome would be contrary both to the principles of the ACA and the plain language of the section 1332 statute.

HR 986 would prevent the Administration from implementing the October 2018 section 1332 guidance, which would undermine the ACA's consumer protections including those that protect persons with pre-existing conditions. Instead, we continue to urge Congress and the Administration to focus on ensuring that people will have access to genuinely affordable and comprehensive health care as intended under the ACA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO