



January 9, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U. S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear House and Senate Leaders:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to offer our thoughts on how to evaluate the impact on access, quality and cost of any proposed changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to ensure that they *first, do no harm* to patients and actually result in improvements.

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 College does not support legislative changes to the ACA that would eliminate or weaken key consumer protections, lead to fewer people having access to affordable coverage, and/or loss of such protections in the future. For this reason, we have urged both the House and Senate to vote against a pending budget resolution that would start the process of repealing the ACA before offering an alternative for review and debate. Independent and non-partisan analyses [show](#) that such efforts to “repeal and replace” the ACA would lead to *massive losses of coverage and consumer protections* for people enrolled in commercial insurance markets and in the Medicaid program, slow the movement to value-based payment reforms, force seniors to pay more for their prescription drugs, and undermine initiatives to prevent illnesses and promote public health. If the ACA is repealed, *every state in the country would experience big increases in the uninsured rate, uncompensated care, and potential loss of coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.*

While we oppose repealing and replacing the ACA, we believe that **improvements can and should be made.** We specifically welcome bipartisan ideas to stabilize insurance markets;

expand consumer choice of insurance products and of physicians and hospitals; ensure network adequacy; support state innovation, reduce administrative burden, and support the critical role played by primary care physicians in providing accessible, high quality and cost-effective care to all types of patients.

However, to ensure that patients would actually benefit from any proposed changes, **the College has developed 10 key [questions](#) that should be asked of any legislation that would alter the coverage and consumer protections available under current law, emphasizing the importance of *first, do no harm* to patients.** While we plan to use these questions on our own to evaluate proposed changes, **we also urge Congress to apply them as it considers potential improvements.**

Our sincere hope is that Congress will join with physicians, nurses and other health professionals; consumer and patient advocacy groups; hospitals; insurers; states; employers; and others to consider approaches that will result in improvements compared to current law in coverage, access, and protections, especially for lower-income patients and those with pre-existing conditions and chronic illnesses, rather than rolling them back.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nitin Damle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nitin S. Damle, MD, MS, MACP
President

CC: Chairs and Ranking Members; Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committees, House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means Committees