The Honorable Lee Zeldin
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete King
339 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dan Donovan
1541 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John J. Faso
1616 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elise M. Stefanik
318 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Claudia Tenney
512 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Reed
2437 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Katko
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Collins
1117 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2017

Dear Representatives

We, the undersigned organizations, representing 20,000 physicians and medical students in New York, share a dedication to improving the health and economic security of all New Yorkers.

We are writing to ask you to forcefully oppose proposals within the *American Health Care Act* (AHCA) that make radical structural changes to Medicaid by changing the federal funding mechanism. The current draft of the bill contains a per capita cap on Medicaid funding, but we urge you to also oppose block grants, should they be offered as a substitute. These proposals are designed merely to reduce federal financial support to state Medicaid programs, not to better serve the 6 million New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid to access medical and long-term care.

As you know, Medicaid is currently a joint federal- and state-financed program that supports children, low-income adults, and individuals with disabilities of all ages by paying for their health care and long-term services and supports, and by providing essential federal protections for Medicare beneficiaries with low-incomes and assets. The majority (60%) of Medicaid spending in New York is on the elderly and disabled, even though they represent less than 24% of beneficiaries.[1] As with most states, Medicaid also serves as the *de facto* long-term care program for the state's seniors.

[1] https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/health/medicaid_2015.pdf

According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, "Nearly $34 billion in federal Medicaid dollars represent, by far, the biggest share of the $54 billion in total federal aid received by the state."[2] Cuts in Medicaid funding, as proposed by the AHCA, would be devastating for patients in New York and our state's budget. New York could lose $4 billion in federal Medicaid funding in 2019, and $47.3 billion between 2019 and 2028 from repeal of the Medicaid expansion under the *Affordable Care Act* alone, to say nothing of the additional cuts from the imposition of a per capita cap.[3]

To make up for this loss of Medicaid funding, New York State would have to contribute much more of its own funding or make deep cuts to eligibility, benefits, and provider payments, with those cuts growing more severe each year. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that across the nation, 14 million people would lose insurance coverage by 2018, and 24 million people would lose coverage by 2026 as a result of the AHCA.[4] In New York State, the coverage of 6 million people on Medicaid would be threatened, with 1.4 million of these people living in your Congressional districts.

Medicaid coverage is especially important for older adults and people with disabilities who need services not covered by Medicare, who cannot afford Medicare premiums and cost-sharing, who require mental health care or addiction treatment, and who live in rural communities. The substantial cuts to Medicaid proposed in the AHCA would therefore cruelly target the most vulnerable people in our society, leaving children, the elderly, the mentally ill and disabled, and the poor without health care coverage and vital services. It is disturbing that we would consider restricting coverage for addiction treatment just as the country and the state are trying to recover from an opioid addiction epidemic. Some of your districts have among the highest overdose death rates in New York.

Almost 2.3 million children in New York State receive their health care through Medicaid. Medicaid has served America's children for more than 50 years and plays a central role in our nation's successful efforts to decrease the number of uninsured children to an all time low of 5%. Children in the New York Medicaid program receive a full range of benefits, including early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment (EPSDT), hospital visits, clinic services, and dental and vision services. Medicaid eligibility during childhood leads to better health across the lifespan and reduced mortality. At this critical time, we cannot afford to lose the enormous gains we have made for New York's children.

[2] http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Federal-Funding-Brief.pdf
[3] http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-7-16health-factsheets-ny.pdf
[4] http://static.politico.com/eb/9c/e933fe474128a624d2a46157a7ef/cbo-report-ahca.pdf

Cutting Medicaid would also have a negative impact on New York's economy. By covering health care services for individuals who could not otherwise afford them, Medicaid provides income and jobs to hospitals, private physicians, and other health care providers. Rural and safety net hospitals, in particular, could be financially devastated by loss of reimbursement for care they provide. The Commonwealth Fund has estimated that New York State would lose 131,000 jobs, about 42,000 of which would come from your districts.[5]

Devastating our health care system in this way would do no good at all. If anything, the experience in New York has shown that the added flexibility promised through a per capita cap structure is completely unnecessary. New York has a record of successful partnerships with the federal government to improve access, reduce costs, improve quality, and save money. The state's current Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program is a testament to how much money can be saved through thoughtful and well-designed reforms, rather than blunt and ill designed cuts at the federal level through per capita caps or block grants.

As physicians, we took an oath to put the health of our patients first. Trust that we will remain vigilant in our monitoring of healthcare policy, and will continue to speak out to protect our patients and communities. Remember that doctors feel a strong sense of moral obligation to those we serve, and as a result have earned the respect and attention of the public. We therefore request that you vote against any plan that includes these structural changes to Medicaid, which would threaten the lives of our patients, and severely damage our communities and the state of New York.

Sincerely,

Eve Kellner, DO
President, Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare

Frank Proscia, MD
President, Doctors Council-SEIU

Bruce Rector, MD
Director, Doctors for America - New York State

Chris Phang, MD
President, Empire State Medical Association, state affiliate of the National Medical Association

Camille A. Clare, MD, MPH

[5] http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2017/jan/repealing-federal-health-reform

President, Manhattan Central Medical Society, a local affiliate of the National Medical Association

James Blum
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Diana Torres-Burgos, MD, MPH
Chair, The National Hispanic Medical Association, local affiliate- Northeast Region,

Marc Manseau, MD and Aaron Fox, MD
Co-Chairs, National Physicians Alliance New York

Vito Grasso, MPA, CAE
Executive Vice President, New York State Academy of Family Physicians

Cappy Collins, MD, MPH
New York State Pediatric Advocacy Coalition

Kamini Doobay
NYC Coalition to Dismantle Racism in the Health System

Oliver Fein, MD
Chair, Physicians for a National Health Program-NY Metro Chapter

Andrew Goldstein
Progressive Doctors

The above organizations are collaborating together as @NYDocs