

September 25, 2017

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chair
Finance Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Finance Committee
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

We write on behalf of the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation to express our opposition to the Graham-Cassidy bill. As patients, family members, and medical professionals that serve on the Foundation's Board of Trustees and National Scientific Advisory Committee, we are alarmed that this bill would weaken pivotal patient protections such as allowing health plans to discriminate against persons with pre-existing conditions. We urge you to oppose the Graham-Cassidy bill and to support renewed, bipartisan negotiations to stabilize the individual market.

The Foundation advocates on behalf of the millions of Americans who are affected by Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, which are collectively known as inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs). IBDs are chronic conditions of the gastrointestinal tract associated with inflammation. Like many other immune-mediated diseases, the incidence and prevalence of IBDs are rising around the world, including the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that prevalence of IBDs in the U.S. is now 3.3 million people. High prescription drug costs, hospitalizations, and surgeries are common among the children and adults who live with IBDs.

The patient protections of non-discrimination and basic coverage standards have real meaning for our community. **Prior to the implementation of these policies, we found that patients struggled to access regular care¹:**

- 96% of survey respondents had insurance, but 25% delayed care, half of whom cited cost reasons
- 51.8% of respondents who tried to purchase health insurance were charged a higher price because of their or a family member's health condition

¹ Rubin, et al. The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation Survey of Inflammatory Bowel Disease Patient Health Care Access. *Inflamm Bowel Dis*. 2016

- 12% of respondents reported the need to purchase secondary health insurance because their primary health plan didn't provide adequate coverage

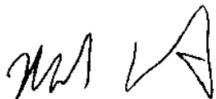
This situation was unacceptable – we personally know many individuals who went without care only to wind up in the hospital because they didn't want to be charged higher premiums from insurers or because their plans didn't cover the prescription drugs and other services they needed. Patients also went into bankruptcy when they reached their insurer's annual and lifetime caps on the coverage for their care.

Insurance must be meaningful and affordable. The Graham-Cassidy bill rolls back patient protections that would increase premium charges for IBD patients, putting insurance out of reach for our patients and making healthcare impossible to access. It allows states to offer plans that don't meet the standards of the Essential Health Benefits, including prescription drug coverage. These policies would make the cost of comprehensive coverage skyrocket, as indicated by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analyses of similar provisions in the Affordable Care Act repeal and replace bills introduced earlier this year. In addition, less services would be protected from annual and lifetime caps, shifting even more of the cost burden to patients, which few could afford to bear.

As patients, families, and physicians, we urge in the strongest possible terms for you to reject the Graham-Cassidy bill and to protect and uphold the principles of non-discrimination and coverage standards. We support your efforts to stabilize the individual market to bring down the cost of healthcare. You must take action to achieve these goals without penalizing the patient community.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. For additional information, please contact the Foundation's Director of Advocacy, Sarah Buchanan, at 646-531-6162 or sbuchanan@crohnscolitisfoundation.org.

Sincerely,



Matt Leavitt, DO, FAOCD
Founder and Chief Medical Officer, Advanced Dermatology & Cosmetic Surgery
Chair, Advocacy Committee
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Board of Trustees

733 Third Avenue
Suite 510
New York, NY 10017

212-685-3440
info@crohnscolitisfoundation.org
www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Rubin".

David T. Rubin, MD
Professor of Medicine
Chief, Section of Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition
University of Chicago Medicine
Co-Chair, Government & Industry Affairs Committee
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation National Scientific Advisory Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Kim".

Sandra Kim, MD
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Co-Director, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center
Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC
Co-Chair, Government & Industry Affairs
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation National Scientific Advisory Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Rosh".

Joel R. Rosh, MD, FAAP, FACP, AGAF
Director, Pediatric Gastroenterology
Vice Chairman, Clinical Development and Research Affairs
Goryeb Children's Hospital/Atlantic Health
Professor of Pediatrics
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Board of Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Oliva-Hemker".

Maria Oliva-Hemker, M.D.
Director, Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Stermer Family Professor of Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease
Vice Chair for Faculty Development, Diversity and Promotion, Dept. of Pediatrics
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Board of Trustees

733 Third Avenue
Suite 510
New York, NY 10017

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www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Van Pulley".

Robert Van Pulley
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Board of Trustees
Fairfax, Virginia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Murray".

Mark Murray, PhD
President and CEO
Arbutus Biopharma
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Board of Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Ullman".

Thomas Ullman, MD
Senior Associate Dean For Clinical Affairs
Professor, Medicine, Gastroenterology
Feinstein IBD Clinical Center, Mount Sinai
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation National Scientific Advisory Committee