

January 10th, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell,
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan,
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer,
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi,
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Minority Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the roughly 60 million Americans living with mental illness, the Cities Thrive Coalition is writing to highlight the immense harm that repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will cause for this population. The ACA provided the largest expansion of behavioral health services by requiring insurers to cover treatment for mental health and substance abuse disorders. This transformation in our nation's behavioral health system brought much needed care and resources to address this national crisis. While we applaud the 114th Congress for passing life-saving mental health reforms, as part of the 21st Century Cures Act, those reforms will be in vain if the ACA is repealed. Our cities have made substantial investments in groundbreaking new initiatives, to improve the access and quality of our behavioral healthcare system and repealing the ACA would cripple this progress.

Before the ACA was enacted, securing affordable coverage, even for individuals with minor mental health diagnoses, was challenging and expensive. With one in five Americans suffering from a mental health related issue, and those with mental illness disproportionately represented among the uninsured, the reforms brought about by the ACA were a monumental turning point. The ACA created numerous protections for our residents with mental illness and addiction, including:

- expanding mental health substance use disorder benefits and parity;
- providing coverage for preventive services, like screening for depression and other behavioral assessments at no additional cost;
- preventing insurers from denying coverage based upon pre-existing conditions;
- adding mental health and addiction treatment to the ten essential health benefits;
- allowing for prescription coverage for behavioral health treatments; and,
- expanding Medicaid, which has allowed 11 million people to gain access to mental health and addiction treatments.

Eliminating these reforms would create dire consequences for our cities, most vulnerable residents who would be faced with the choice of paying the mortgage or purchasing costly private insurance.

The repeal of Medicaid expansion alone, which pays for 60% of the nation's mental health services, would be devastating to our city-led initiatives, which provide high quality care to millions of individuals in need. One in five Medicaid beneficiaries has some type of mental illness or substance abuse issue and eliminating funding or formula changes to the program would make it extremely difficult to continue at our current levels.

We are united in urging you to build upon, not tear down, the progress that has been made to our behavioral health system through the ACA. Cities are on the front lines of the fight against mental illness and substance abuse. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to continue to move our behavioral health system forward for all Americans.

Sincerely,

New York, NY – Mayor Bill de Blasio
Orlando, FL – Mayor Buddy Dyer
Birmingham, AL – Mayor William Bell
Fishers, IN – Mayor Scott Fadness
Cambridge, MA – Mayor Denise Simmons
Columbia, SC – Mayor Steve Benjamin
Oklahoma City, OK – Mayor Mick Cornett
San Francisco, CA – Mayor Ed Lee
South Bend, IN – Mayor Pete Buttigieg
Baltimore, MD – Mayor Catherine Pugh
Laredo, TX – Mayor Pete Saenz
Allentown, PA – Mayor Ed Pawlowski
Albuquerque, NM – Mayor Richard Berry
Mesa, AZ – Mayor John Giles
Oakland, CA – Mayor Libby Schaaf
Urbana, IL – Mayor Laurel Prussing
Boston, MA – Mayor Martin Walsh
Philadelphia, PA – Mayor Jim Kenney
Sacramento, CA – Mayor Darrell Steinberg
Louisville, KY – Mayor Greg Fischer
West Hollywood, CA – Mayor Lauren Meister
Seattle, WA – Mayor Edward Murray
Newton, MA – Mayor Setti Warren
Minneapolis, MN – Mayor Betsy Hodges
Washington, DC – Mayor Muriel Bowser
Salisbury, MD – Mayor Jacob Day
Louisville, KY – Mayor Greg Fischer
Jersey City, NJ – Mayor Steve Fulup
Lansing, MI – Mayor Virgil “Virg” Bernero

Santa Fe, NM – Mayor Javier Gonzales
Little Rock, AR – Mayor Mark Stodala
Benton Harbor, MI – Mayor Marcus Muhammad
Phoenix, AZ – Mayor Greg Stanton
New Orleans, LA – Mayor Mitch Landrieu
San Jose, CA – Mayor Sam Liccardo
Springfield, MA -- Mayor Domenic J. Sarno
Worcester, MA -- Mayor Joseph Petty
Alexandria, VA -- Mayor Allison Silberberg
Hartford, CT -- Mayor Luke Bronin
Toledo, OH -- Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson
Kalamazoo, MI -- Mayor Bobby Hopewell
Dayton, OH -- Mayor Nan Whaley
Las Cruces, NM -- Mayor Ken Miyagishima
Pittsburgh, PA -- Mayor Bill Peduto
Fargo, ND -- Mayor Tim Mahoney
Nashville, TN -- Mayor Megan Barry
Tempe, AZ -- Mayor Mark Mitchell
Dallas, TX -- Mayor Mike Rawlings
Charleston, SC -- Mayor John Tecklenburg
St. Louis, MO -- Mayor Francis Slay
Tucson, AZ -- Mayor Jonathan Rothschild
Coconut Creek, FL -- Mayor Mikkie Belvedere
Hornell, NY -- Mayor Shawn D. Hogan
Mount Vernon, NY -- Mayor Richard Thomas
Plainfield, NJ -- Mayor Adrian Mapp
Pembroke Pines, FL -- Mayor Frank Ortis
Tallahassee, FL -- Mayor Andrew Gillum
Ft. Myers, FL -- Mayor Randall Henderson
Hoboken, NJ -- Mayor Dawn Zimmer
Memphis, TN -- Mayor Jim Strickland
Austin, TX -- Mayor Steve Adler
Denver, CO -- Mayor Michael Hancock
Atlanta, GA -- Mayor Kasim Reed
Jackson, MS -- Mayor Tony Yarber
Syracuse, NY -- Mayor Stephanie Miner
New Bedford, MA -- Mayor Jon Mitchell
Las Vegas, NV -- Mayor Carolyn Goodman
West Carthage, NY -- Mayor Scott Burto
Long Beach, CA -- Mayor Robert Garcia
Bridgeport, CT -- Mayor Joseph Ganim

Tacoma, WA -- Mayor Marilyn Strickland
Madison, WI -- Mayor Paul Soglin
Evanston, IL -- Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl
Oneonta, NY -- Mayor Gary Herzig
Falcon Heights, MN -- Mayor Peter Lindstrom
Surprise, AZ -- Mayor Sharon Wolcott
Hamtramck, MI -- Mayor Karen Majewski
Holyoke, MA -- Mayor Alex Morse
Haledon, NJ -- Mayor Domenick Stampone
Central Falls, RI -- Mayor James Diossa
Princeton, NJ -- Mayor Liz Lempert
West Palm Beach, FL -- Mayor Jeri Muoio
Carrboro, NC -- Mayor Lydia Lavelle
North Miami, FL -- Mayor Smith Joseph
Anaheim, CA -- Mayor Tom Tait
Hempstead, NY -- Mayor Wayne Hall
Skokie, IL -- Mayor George Van Dusen
Richmond, CA -- Mayor Tom Butt
Sunrise, FL -- Mayor Michael Ryan
Providence, RI -- Mayor Jorge Elorza
Paterson, NJ -- Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres
Mamaroneck, NY -- Mayor Norman Rosenblum
San Leandro, CA -- Mayor Pauline Cutter
Bangor, ME -- Mayor Joe Baldacci
Linden, NJ -- Mayor Derek Armstead
Milwaukee, WI -- Mayor Tom Barrett
Salt Lake City, UT -- Mayor Jackie Biskupski
Bend, OR -- Mayor Jim Clinton
New Rochelle, NY -- Mayor Noam Bramson
Sioux Falls, SD -- Mayor Mike Huether
Davenport, IA -- Mayor Frank Klipsch