



THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY
40 FULTON STREET, 18TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038
212.308.1414 TEL 212.832.8646 FAX
www.americangeriatrics.org

August 7, 2017

The Honorable Susan Collins
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John McCain
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins, Senator McCain, and Senator Murkowski:

On behalf of our 6,000 healthcare professional members and the older Americans they serve, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) would like to offer our continued support to help guide public policy solutions that protect high-quality, person-centered, and affordable health coverage for us all.

Like other leaders in the stakeholder community, we agree that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) *can* be improved. We agree that Congress must develop bipartisan proposals in sufficient detail so that all Americans have the opportunity to make informed decisions about a better health system. Previously considered proposals would have increased costs, reduced health coverage, and cut key services for millions of Americans—including many older men and women who rely on Medicaid for long-term care services and supports. **We applaud your opposition to those proposals. We support your call for bipartisan collaboration. And we look forward to sharing our expertise on priorities that matter to the millions of older adults and caregivers who we serve in the clinic—and who you serve in Congress.**

The AGS includes geriatricians, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physician assistants, social workers, and health professional trainees who work across diverse care settings providing the expert care we all will need as we age. We strive to improve health, independence, and quality of life for older people. We believe that doing so will ensure they can continue to make meaningful contributions to our communities.

We are hopeful that renewed calls for collaboration across both aisles of Congress open a door for you and your colleagues to find ways to strengthen the nation's healthcare system. We encourage you to invite stakeholder input, to hold public hearings, and to provide ample opportunity for feedback from the American public regarding policy proposals that can build on gains made under the ACA. We believe that is possible by building federal and state policies that:

- Expand older adults' healthcare options to include in-home and other care that enable us to live independently as long as possible; help older adults and caregivers better understand

healthcare needs and make the most of Medicare and other benefits; and provide caregivers with adequate resources and support.

- Ensure that value-based purchasing and other quality initiatives take into account the unique healthcare needs of all older people.
- Strengthen primary and preventive care and care coordination.
- Address the acute and growing nationwide shortage of geriatricians (physicians with advanced training in the care of older people) and all geriatrics healthcare professionals; and ensure that other healthcare providers have training that prepares them to meet the unique healthcare needs of older people.
- Step-up research concerning healthy aging, the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of age-related health problems, and the cost-effectiveness of various approaches to care; and ensure that older adults are adequately represented in research trials.

We remain committed to the core principle that all Americans should have access to high-quality, affordable health care—especially care that supports our independence as we age. **We are opposed to any changes that detract from care or increase costs for Americans.** Since some six million older Americans and some 10 million Americans with disabilities also are supported by Medicaid, **we are opposed to any changes that would reduce access to necessary services for older adults and people with disabilities.**

We have provided additional information and research on these and several other core priorities in past letters to your colleagues, which we summarized in an article for the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.¹ We look forward to working with you and the Trump Administration as an expert resource on health care for older Americans. Together, we can achieve our vision for a future when every older American receives high-quality, person-centered, and affordable care.

Sincerely,



Debra Saliba, MD, MPH, AGSF
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Lundebjerg, N.E., Hollmann, P., Malone, M.L., on behalf of the AGS Board of Directors and Public Policy Committee. (2017). American Geriatrics Society policy priorities for New Administration and 115th Congress. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 65(3), 466-469. doi:10.1111/jgs.14854. Available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.14854/full>