



# OREGON AFSCME

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March 20, 2017

The Honorable Tim Murphy  
Chairman  
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette  
Ranking Member  
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Murphy and Ranking Member DeGette:

On behalf of Oregon AFSCME, which represents 25,000 workers, including 1,000 in the behavioral health field, we thank you for holding a hearing in the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on March 21, 2017 to highlight the opioid epidemic. We ask that our letter be made part of the hearing record.

Oregon, like the rest of our nation, is besieged by an opioid epidemic. Prescription and illicit opioids are the main driver of drug overdose deaths. Nationwide, opioids were involved in 33,091 deaths in 2015, including 505 in Oregon. Many individuals develop addictions to prescription drugs then switch to heroin, which can be cheaper and easier to obtain. In Oregon, about 70% of heroin overdoses start with prescription pain pills.

As Congress considers effective ways to help states address this public health crisis that is tearing apart families and communities, we urge you to examine how the American Health Care Act could harm our nation's ability to treat opioid addiction and mental illness.

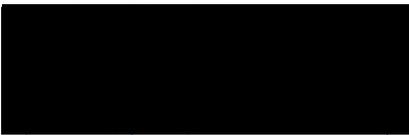
The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the American Health Care Act will cause as many as 14 million people to become uninsured in 2018 and 24 million by 2026. These millions of Americans will lose access to addiction and mental health treatment, the very services that are needed to help individuals recover from addiction, relapse, trauma and mental illness.

Oregon's Health Authority, has analyzed the impact of this bill on our state. As many as 465,000 Oregonians will lose health coverage between 2018 and 2023, including some 80,000 next year. The fundamental change in Medicaid would threaten low-income working Oregonians and families drastically. Currently, one million Oregonians are covered by Oregon Health Plan, our state's Medicaid program. Enactment of the American Health Care Act will mean that in 2020, 183,000 Oregonians will lose Medicaid coverage and as many as 375,000 by 2026. The Oregon Health Plan, like other expansion Medicaid plans has proved to be a

workhorse when it comes to addressing the needs of Oregonians with mental health and substance use disorders. The loss of this coverage will harm those who have finally gotten access to mental health and addiction treatment, as well as their families.

The American Health Care Act, if enacted, would also shift \$190 million in costs to our state in 2020. The cumulative cost shift would be \$2.6 billion over the next six years. The ramifications of this reduction in federal funds is broad and deep. It will slow economic activity in Oregon, undermine our state budget and risk the loss of more than 23,300 health care jobs, including behavioral health care workers. Oregon, like other states, would be forced to deny access, benefits and services to hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable residents, or cut state funds for education, public safety, environmental protection or other needed public services, or a combination of all three. These options are untenable and would weaken our efforts to address the opioid epidemic.

As the Committee considers how the federal government responds to the opioid crisis, we urge the Congress not to make it worse by approving the American Health Care Act.



Michael Seville  
Executive Director, Oregon AFSCME Council 75